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THE ROMANCE OF A REGIMENT

A GREAT GRENADIER.

THE ROMANCE OF A REGIMENT

BEING THE TRUE AND DIVERTING STORY OF
THE GIANT GRENADIERS OF POTSDAM,
HOW THEY WERE CAUGHT AND
HELD IN CAPTIVITY

1713—1740

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BY

J. R. HUTCHINSON, B.A.

"That unique giant regiment, of which the world has heard so much in a vague, half-mythical way."—CARLYLE.

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THE

ROMANCE OF A REGIMENT

CHAPTER I

THE MASTER AND HIS MANIA

SCARCELY had English Anne ceased to touch for the old King's-evil at the Court of St. James, when a King's-evil of a more virulent type began to show itself at the Court of Berlin.

It was the spring of 1713, and King Frederick William, the first of that name, had but just ascended the throne of Prussia. Reared in the lap of a Court as pusillanimous as it was extravagant, he already, although only five-and-twenty years of age, enjoyed a well-established home reputation for that love of fat money-bags and strapping soldiers which was yet to make him the by-word and jest of the civilized world;

and no sooner did he taste the sweets of power than, giving free rein to his bent, he proceeded to cut down Court expenses with unsparing hand, in order to have the more to spend upon the gratification of his military whim.

It was highly characteristic of the man, as of his later reign, that his stepmother, the fanatical Queen-Dowager, should have been the first to feel the pinch of his miserly fingers. "We poor beggars must cut our coat according to our cloth," said the King, with a covert quip at the good woman's ostentatious piety; and although his coffers contained 230,000 ducats in gold, and upwards of 100,000 dollars in silver, he forthwith dismissed her maids of honour, sent her domestics packing, and bundled her plate off to the Mint.

This, however, was but the preliminary dust raised by the new broom. The prodigality of the late King, under whose *régime* a French laundryman drew higher pay than an ambassador, and a dancing-master as much as a general, afforded admirable scope for sweeping. The Court poet, making use for once of feet that did not halt, sought another market for his rhymes. Army officers no more battened on

stolen forage allowances. Salaries, pensions, perquisites, all alike suffered merciless curtailment. Courtiers were in dismay. "Our good master is dead," they cried, "and the new one sends us to the devil!"

The royal cellars, the stables, the kennels—each of its kind the admiration and envy of Europe—were next subjected to the searching processes of the new economy. Of his father's rare vintages the King retained only the Rhine and Moselle; of his magnificent stud, only twelve pairs of carriage and twenty saddle horses. The late King's four hundred dogs, together with his menagerie of wild beasts, were sold for what they would fetch. The Jewish vultures had fine pickings.

One of their number, an adventuress of the name of Lippmann, who hailed from Halberstadt, did not fare so well, however. Having by some means obtained the *entrée* at Court, she had succeeded in amassing a fortune by trading on the old King's credulity and inordinate love of jewels; and when he died she quietly and expeditiously loaded two waggons with as much money as she could get together in the hurry of the moment, and set the heads of the horses

towards the nearest frontier. The new broom overtook them, and the money, some 60,000 dollars in all, rattled merrily back into the royal treasury. An ignoble contingent of cooks, stewards, butlers, pages, ushers, players and musicians, was swept by the same besom of reform into the army, there to fill a more laborious *rôle* than that of dancing attendance upon a dotard King.

By such drastic measures as these—speedily extended far beyond the precincts of Palace or Court—did Frederick William pave the way for the inception of that grand military system to which it may be said he was already in honour pledged. Years before, whilst learning profanity and the art of war in Flanders, he had been taunted, by certain officers of the allied armies, with the fact that his fatherland could not, as they alleged, maintain a paltry 15,000 men without the aid of foreign subsidies. "Can it not?" retorted the angry Prince. "I will yet show you that Prussia can support double the number unaided." The time was now come to prove the boast no idle one; to prove, indeed, that the resources of the despised kingdom were equal to the maintenance, not

of 30,000 soldiers alone, but of thrice that number.

For in the intervening years his ambition had soared to greater heights than he foresaw when the boast was uttered. The Prussian army, it is true, had grown in the interim, but not so rapidly as to keep pace with his dreams of military grandeur. Thirty thousand, the ostensible fighting force bequeathed him by his father, was to his ambitious mind a mere bagatelle. How defend his "long and disjointed possessions" with so insignificant a handful of men? Had not his "beloved brother the jack-pudding," whom he had thrashed as a boy, whom he might have occasion to thrash again, become Heir Apparent to the throne of England? Had he not those enterprising "Dutch devils" to circumvent on the one hand, his pretensions to Jülich-Berg to uphold on the other? Above all, because including all, had not the time come when a King of Prussia should "make a figure" in the world," and command respect for the crown which the first Frederick had placed upon his own head amid the jeers of Europe? Thirty thousand men? He must have eighty! Pride, self-interest, pique counselled the augmentation,

and to effect it Frederick William, having first put his finances in the way of order after the despotic fashion of which we have had a glimpse, set himself roundly to work. Now that his time was come, he should not prove false to the "warlike appearance" which fondly astute eyes had, it is said, perceived in him as an infant.

In Prussian dominions it had long been customary to assign each regiment a district in which to recruit, and to this system the King now had recourse for the raising of his new levies. But the plan did not work well. Regiment constantly clashed with regiment, rival recruiting parties fought each other into the surgeon's hands for possession of eligible men. This was its chief drawback from a military point of view. From the point of view of the people, there was another, yet more serious. Burghers, artisans, apprentices, students, were violently torn from home and occupation without respect of person. Here and there one resisted, hundreds fled, thousands went into hiding. An edict calling upon the recalcitrants to submit, on pain of having their property confiscated and their names posted on the gallows, served only to fan the flames. Every-

where the malcontents fomented disturbance; the entire kingdom broke into tumultuous protest against the violent proceedings of King and recruiter. To such a pitch did the opposition swell that the old recruiting system practically went to pieces. The King was obliged to yield, and it was decreed that for the future no man should be forced into the service.

This seeming concession made, Frederick William began to cast about for other means of violating the liberty of the subject. The idea of remodelling the old system occurred to him, and without loss of time he proceeded to carry it into execution on lines worthy of the greatest recruiter of modern times.

His entire kingdom he divided into circles, according to the number of hearths. Five thousand hearths were allotted to a foot regiment, fifteen hundred to a regiment of horse. Each district was subdivided into as many cantons as there were companies in the regiment to which it was allotted, and each and every canton was given to understand exactly what it had to expect from the royal clemency. Was it the sudden springing of the impress upon a man, to the present dismay and future

grief of his wife and children? No more of that, my lieges! Was it voluntary enlistment, eloquent of a freedom of will totally at variance with the prerogative of a despot? No more of that either! The last state of the malcontents was destined to be worse than the first. Every able-bodied male, excepting only certain classes necessary for purposes of education, trade, manufacture, and tillage, being predestined from his birth to bear arms, was thenceforth to be held in daily remembrance of it either at home or in barracks. Learning the name of his future regiment with that of his native village, every boy, who was not a cripple or dwarfed, was to wear a perpetual reminder of that name, and of the servitude in store for him, in the shape of a regimental stock. Even children of five years and under were enrolled as future food for powder, and their parents obliged to give security for their appearance when called for.

The rigorous enforcement of this system of legalized kidnapping quickly drained the country of able-bodied males. The army throve upon it, it is true, but not in strict proportion to the drain upon the country. Only men of a certain

height could be enlisted, and death, term of service, and desertion had to be reckoned with. Scarcely a year passed but the streets of Amsterdam were filled with hundreds of deserters, fine strapping fellows all, wearing the Prussian uniform. Nor was the case of the Dutch capital by any means unique. Every foreign town within easy reach of Prussian soil had its steady influx of runaways, and to offset this, the most serious counterdrain upon his ranks, the King, whose promises were fast becoming notorious for "ending in smoke," again and again did extra violence upon his subjects. "Take up everybody fit to carry arms. Let none escape except those belonging to foreign ministers," were the orders from Potsdam on these occasions, and many a hot press, following hard upon the orders, spread terror through town and country-side. "Better be a eunuch in a Turkish harem," cried the harassed people, "than a Prussian subject."

Having thus riddled out of his own dominions every available man capable of shouldering a musket, the insatiable King turned his gaze abroad. The Empire, Holland, France, England had men and to spare. To hire them

would be a good stroke of policy; to steal them, a better. East, west, north and south his emissaries went forth, disguised as farmers, as parsons, as servants, as anything, in short, that would serve to satisfy their master's greed for recruits. Even women played the *rôle* of recruiter, and more than one fine fellow, seduced in a double sense, awoke from the witchery of a pair of sparkling eyes only when the cruel bastinado compelled him to abjure a relentless mistress for a still more relentless master.

By such means as these—fair or foul, no matter—Frederick William impressed or enrolled, outside his dominions, more than 40,000 men in the space of twenty-eight years. At the cost of infinite pains, fabulous sums, and innumerable squabbles—through the assiduous prosecution of the most unscrupulous, dare-devil system of man-stealing the world has ever seen, the strength of the Prussian army finally touched, and went beyond, the 80,000 his ambition had fixed.

With the making of such an army at his back —for its maximum strength of 89,000 was not reached until 1740, the year of his death—the

King thought himself very formidable, little suspecting that the sole reasons for his never becoming so were ingrained in his very nature. His ministers and flatterers took infinite pains to foster this opinion. They drew frequent parallels between the ancient Macedonian troops and theirs, and hinted that, if Alexander the Great could do such wonderful things with a comparative handful of well-disciplined men, there was nothing his Majesty of Prussia might not achieve, with troops unquestionably the finest in Europe. In most matters the King thought his ministers fools, and told them so to their teeth; but here he was at one with them. He was "as intoxicated as he could be" with the notion of his power, and had his policy kept pace with, or his courage equalled, the strength of his illusion, the peace of Europe must inevitably have suffered serious disturbance. But that method of employing the magnificent military resources at his command was left to his successor, who fought many a battle, and won many a victory, with the veteran material collected and moulded by the master hand of the Recruiter King.

Drawing mazes with his finger on the misty

window-panes at Wusterhausen, he once enunciated his policy, in characteristic terms, and perhaps for the only time in his life, to the British Envoy Whitworth. The topic was the affairs of the North, in which the King imagined himself to have been over-reached by British diplomacy. "He went roundly to work," he declared, "and allowed no little arts or fetches to be practised upon him with impunity. The Dutch proverb, 'A man a man, a word a word,' was the footing on which he desired to live. No two-faced diplomatists, no double-tongued politicians for him! If they sacrificed his interests, if they embroiled him, let them have a care! He should not scruple to defend himself."

This was in 1717. By the year 1739 he had apparently made up his mind that "the best system is to have no system at all," and his conduct fully bore out his conviction. Angry with George II. for making so formidable a figure, he was also angry with France because she did not join with Spain and declare war on England, angry with the Dutch because they seemed disposed to augment their forces by sea and land, angry with the Emperor and Russia

for having made their peace with the Turk, and, lastly, angry with himself because he lacked courage to put his mischievous designs in execution. He was "frightened at his own shadow." His army, though always ready to take the field at eight days' warning, was never used. Often he took up arms, never once, after the third year of his reign, when ended his brush with Sweden, did he go to war. The yearly visitation of Hanover by the Georges filled him with apprehension and rage. When his recruiters were put out of the way, as they too often richly deserved to be, he threatened condign vengeance. Pot-valiant to the point of drawing his sword, he flashed it furiously in the eyes of his temporary enemy, and, sobered by the demonstration, returned the blade to its scabbard unbaptized. An open niggard and a covert coward, he blustered in his own dominions, teased, scolded, and bullied his neighbours about matters too trivial to involve him in consequences, but could never be persuaded, either by his impetuous temper, his inordinate pride, or his most cherished interests, to make any attempt likely to be attended with danger or expense.

Lacking the courage of his ambitions, and fearing to employ his forces for purposes of revenge, the King, since so fine an army must be put to some use, now and then doffed the recruiter's sash and assumed the *rôle* of showman. Once a year—in the month of May, unless gout or apprehension of his detested English rival's coming to Hanover occasioned delay—the troops were paraded in grand review. The Great Grenadiers, his pet regiment, first underwent the ordeal of the fifty-four movements which were *de rigueur* on such occasions. Then came the "small men," as the rank and file were called. No detail of condition, equipment, or adornment escaped the lynx-eyed King. He knew exactly how many soldiers had died, how many recruits had been enrolled in each regiment, battalion and company since the last review. The length of the men's cuffs, the height of their collars, the number of buttons on their boots, the very cockades of the horses —tin, japanned black, an invention of his Majesty's—all came in for silent approval or open disapprobation. Himself a rigid submitter to all rules and regulations, he was an uncompromising stickler for their observance by

others. What was good enough for his soldiers was good enough for him; what was good for him could not be bad for them. Bleeding relieved him when over-heated, as he too often was, with passion or drink. Bleeding must have a like beneficial effect upon the restless or insubordinate soldier. "Bleed the regiment, every man!" was his command at one of the Spring reviews, in bitterly cold weather. He himself was first operated upon; the unlucky regiment next, company by company, as they stood under arms. Never before or after did Frederick William cause so much blood to be spilt.

In this month of May, in this grand function of the grand review, all the petty spites, jealousies, and resentments which the irascible King had conceived or cherished during the preceding twelvemonth, reached their culmination. Happy the man, be he foreign minister or prince, who was bidden to the show. Than this no more signal mark of the royal favour could be conferred upon him; nor, in its absence, of the royal displeasure. Guy-Dickens, appointed English Resident at Berlin in 1730, saw the King for the first time in that capacity

at the review in May 1732. Enraged against England by the abrupt rupture of the double-marriage negotiation, the King had deprived him of that privilege for two whole years. "Such a thing would appear incredible," says Guy-Dickens, "was I placed under any other meridian but that of Berlin." There it was not only credible, it was notorious. He who incurred the King's ill-will was always liable, be his rank or station what it might, to be unceremoniously hustled from the royal presence, or threatened with a cut of the royal cane; but the unkindest cut of all was the cut inflicted by ignoring the offender when the annual review came round, and the Recruiter King, chuckling with gratified spite and pride, flaunted his useless prowess in the face of an amused continent.

At these reviews "the whole talk ran upon nothing else but who had the best regiment, which performed most to the King's satisfaction, and"—this the foremost topic—"who had made the finest recruits since last year." For if there was anything the King dearly loved, it was a fine recruit. Given to blushing if a lady kissed his hand as Crown Prince, manhood found him grown so callous to the charms of

women, that when, in the course of a visit to the licentious Court of Dresden, retiring early that he might not retire drunk, he charged his son "to have a care of the ladies," the circumstance was considered sufficiently noteworthy to call for mention in the official despatches of the day; while a report, current in April of the same year, to the effect that he had written to the King of Poland, pressing him to include some ladies in his retinue on his return visit, set all Berlin agape with astonishment and incredulity.

These were concessions to the fair sex which "did not easily obtain belief," so wide-spread and well-founded was the popular conception of his supercilious and unimpassioned regard for them. Who had not heard tell of how, when he instituted the famous *tabagie* or tobacco parliament in 1713, by presenting the Belvidere Garden to General Gersdorff of the Great Grenadiers, he had expressly stipulated that, while pipes and tobacco should always be kept there, no women should on any account be allowed to enter?—or how, when slapped on the face by the presumably virtuous Pannewitz, one of the Queen's maids-of-honour, whom he acci-

dentally embraced on an ill-lighted staircase, the inamative King could think of nothing more suitable to the exigencies or opportunities of the moment than to exclaim, "Oh, the naughty she-devil"? Who, moreover, was ignorant of that mad, malicious prank played upon him by the dissolute King of Poland, which had sent him flying, hot with indignation and shame, from the presence of a ravishingly beautiful but nude female? These things were known to all the world and his wife, and when talked over with many a shrug and wink, as no doubt they often were, we may be sure a certain stock saying of the purist King was not forgotten: "The most beautiful girl or woman in the world would be a matter of indifference to me; but soldiers, they are my weakness!"

They were by no means his only weakness. A character poorer in strength, or richer in weaknesses, was seldom or never seen. A good dinner pleased him almost as much as a fine recruit, especially if served at another's expense. He had a most embarrassing habit of inviting himself to the table of any minister, officer, or official whom he had reason to suspect of being unusually "flush" of pocket. One of his

Generals, who enjoyed almost as great a notoriety for "nearness" in money matters as his royal master, once sought to excuse himself from this compulsory hospitality on the score of having no establishment suitable for his Majesty's entertainment. "Oh, Herr So-and-So's will do very well," said the King, naming one of the most expensive hostelries in Berlin; and there, in due course, he put in an appearance with a numerous company. The dinner was all that the veriest gourmand could desire—numerous courses, costly dishes, rare wines; to all of which the guests did ample justice. In rising from table the General, who was resolved that he should not be "let in" for so loyal a spread, called for the landlord and asked:

"How much a head?"

"One florin," replied Boniface, "without the wine."

"Then here's a florin for myself," said the General, "and another for his Majesty. As for the rest of these people, I did not desire their company, and they can pay for themselves."

The King settled the score, but it may be doubted whether he ever forgave it, since his stinginess was so excessive as to be proverbial.

"I have no gold," was his stereotyped response to calls for money. Nor was ever Jew more avaricious. Some workmen once came upon a hidden treasure, and a dispute arising as to how it should be divided, the matter was referred to the King. His decision removed every ground of difference. "Send it to me," said he.

His fondness for oysters knew no bounds save repletion. To gulp down a hundred or so at a time was a common feat with him. He once, in the depth of a most severe winter, made a journey to Hamburg in an open post-waggon, to enjoy the succulent bivalves—fresh! Equally fond of his pipe, he smoked incessantly. Every one who took a seat in the *tabagie*, or tobacco-council, had to make at least a pretence of sucking at a pipe. Nothing pleased him more than to compel the Prince Royal, who detested the fragrant weed as heartily as his father detested him, to smoke himself ill. When King Stanislaus was at Berlin, their Majesties used to smoke from seven p.m. until two o'clock in the morning, consuming in that time upwards of thirty-two pipes of tobacco each. Count Seckendorf himself braved the pangs of nausea to please the King in this particular. Many

and various were the tributes of amused recognition paid to a habit which was regarded at that time as highly eccentric in one so eminent. At Prague, in 1732, to cite a single instance, the Emperor and Empress, who were adepts at "taking people as they found them," won his heart and continued allegiance by a gift "the peculiarity of which was much talked of" at the time. "It is, my Lord," writes simple-hearted Thomas Robinson, British Resident at Vienna, to his Secretary for Foreign Affairs, "a Great Golden Case, containing all manner of Utencils necessary for Smoaking. There are six different Painted China Pipes with Gold-worked Joints; Tobacco Stoppers, fusils for striking fire, and two knives, with China handles set in Gold, the one in the nature of a pruning knife for cutting the Tobacco: the whole distributed into their proper divisions, besides a great compartment left for a large quantity of Smoaking Tobacco."

To his habit of excessive smoking the King's extreme irritability of temper was perhaps due. Or it may have been "an effect of wine," for the consumption of which he was said to be "the best German imaginable."

"Yesterday evening," writes Guy-Dickens, "the King dined one German mile hence with one of his chamberlains. Several other persons of distinction were also invited, and they all returned to town, the King not excepted, most immoderately drunk." The following day, after standing godfather to the child of one of his Generals, he was visibly "in the same cue." Indeed, he "had not gone to bed sober for a month." At most times, in most places, he "drank excessive hard."

In circumstances such as these it is scarcely matter for wonder that his periodical "fits of fondness" for this, that, or the other person should have been succeeded by fits of uncontrollable anger, or that he should have earned for himself the sobriquet of "The Wrathful Monarch." While yet a youth he had given his attendants a taste of his quality by throwing one of them over the banisters, and as he advanced in years his temper went from bad to worse. So violent were his paroxysms of passion, they not infrequently made him ill, and when this was the case no one could go near him "without being ill-used in words or blows." In sickness as in health his favourite implement of

wrath was the stick which he invariably carried or kept by him ready for instant use. He is said to have furnished a room with these ready-reckoners. A characteristic story is told of him in this connection. One day a Jew, seeing the burly royal figure and its attendant stick coming down the street, took to his heels and fled. The King caught sight of him.

"Hi! you there, stop!"

The runaway Hebrew pulled up.

"What are you running for?" demanded the King.

"I—I vas a leetle afraid," stammered the trembling Jew.

"Afraid, eh?" cried the King, upon whom the point of the other's remark was by no means lost. "You have no business to be afraid. You ought to love me!" and to inculcate the needful lesson he forthwith proceeded to conjugate the verb "to love" upon the poor fellow's jacket.

To this turbulent and irascible nature the gaining of a fine recruit was as oil upon troubled waters. The news of such an acquisition produced an immediate and visible effect upon his countenance and temper, and all was then sun-

shine and peace at Potsdam, or Wusterhausen, or Berlin, or wheresoever the otherwise wrathful monarch chanced to be. For in this lay his weakness of weaknesses, his love of loves, from which all his pleasures were derived, and to which all his passions were tributary, all his troubles due. It dominated his entire life, it was strong upon him in death; and in it the student of Frederick William's little part upon the stage of Kings may find the true and only key to his character, policy and career.

CHAPTER II

"THE MEANS OF GRACE"

FREDERICK WILLIAM'S passion for soldiers of extraordinary stature "passed all imagination." Report gave but an inadequate notion of it, and the lengths to which it was carried had to be witnessed in all their absurd actuality in order to be rightly appreciated. For this was the acute phase of his military mania, a new form of madness which, baffling alike the gaping world at large and the ablest chirurgeons of his day, called loudly for "further anatomical research."

The outward and visible sign of this singular form of dementia was a regiment styled variously the Great Grenadiers, the Big Prussian Blues, the Potsdam Giants—or, to omit half-a-score of equally apt appellatives—the Means of Grace. Composed of the tallest men to be found in all Europe, it was the centre from which all Frederick William's military splendour radiated,

the model on which all his other regiments were moulded, the axis on which all the interests of his little world revolved; and in the portentous ranks and unparalleled discipline of its three battalions lay hidden, as in a germ, the greatness of the second Frederick, the destinies of the two Silesias, the foundations of an empire. The story of its growth is one of the most curious in history.

"He who sends me tall soldiers," Frederick William was wont to avow, "can do with me whatever he likes." So universally did this candid confession become circulated, and so unanimously was it accepted at its face value, that emperors, kings, queens, princes, home and foreign ministers of every state or diplomatic degree, lick-spittles of every shade of rank and servility, recognizing in it the only effective recipe for favour or preferment, hastened, in face of present or in view of future need, to pay their court through the medium of giant recruits for the eccentric King's body-guard. The warmest protestations of brotherly or cousinly regard were so much waste of breath at the Prussian Court unless thus backed up. The highest in the land might sue in vain who sued through

any channel but that of nature's extra cubit; and thus it was that the regiment came to be known, through the ironical wit of Wilhelmine, own daughter to the exacting gigantomaniac, as the "Means of Grace."

Peter the Great, Czar of all the Russias and Protector of the Northern Coasts, with politic eye to assistance in his designs on Sweden, and to the future training of Russian military cadets, led the van of illustrious panderers. His first contribution to the ranks of the giant regiment was made as early as the year 1714, when he forwarded to Berlin a contingent of "eighty Muscovites notable for their tallness." The year 1717 saw the half-savage Czar himself installed at Berlin, in the Queen's palace of Mon-Bijou, asking without ceremony for whatever tickled his fancy, drawing blood from that stoniest of stones, his royal host's miserly heart. A quantity of rare statuary, a priceless cabinet of amber curios, and a Dutch pleasure-yacht said to have been worth £50,000 of present-day money, followed him, on this or other occasions, to his marshy capital amid the fens of Neva.

An outlay so phenomenally lavish, under a *régime* which made the ordering of a new suit

of clothes an epoch in Court annals, must have cost the parsimonious King of Prussia many bitter and lasting regrets but for the sequel. This more than reconciled him to his prodigality, for the Czar had promised to send him, in compensation, an annual batch of tall northerners, and ere many months had passed there arrived, as an earnest of his good faith, 150 of the tallest to be found in Russian dominions. Year in, year out, from that time onward until the death of the great Czar closed the account, a squad of sheepskin-clad Muscovite giants, footsore and weary from, it too often happened, a terrible mid-winter march, filed sullenly into the palace yard at Potsdam, where no emotions were wasted upon them save those of wonder and delight. The Czar's minister, who was "much caress'd" on such occasions, reaped the reward of their sufferings. Upon the whole, the Czar's covetous pickings at Mon-Bijou proved anything but a bad investment for Frederick William. The latter possessed a pretty sense of humour, and he must often, when asked whence he had obtained a certain son of Anak, have echoed with twinkling eyes the naïve words uttered at Berlin, in 1717, by one of Catherine

the Brown's serving women, apropos of the child she carried in her arms: "The Czar did me the honour."

The colossal Russian seems to have stood high in Frederick William's esteem until an officer, whom he had sent to Petersburg on a man-hunting expedition, returned, after a whole year's dissipation in the northern capital, with some specimens who came up to the King's expectations neither in point of number nor of size, and this, together with other disappointments from the same quarter, began "to alter his opinion of 'em." Still, he was not at all averse to taking what he could get, and when, shortly after Peter's death, the Czarina ordered her provincial governors to send forthwith to Potsdam "all the tall men that could be found in their respective districts, of six foot four inches high and upwards," the gift, which netted twenty men, was hailed with liveliest satisfaction. Succeeding years doubtless brought other contingents from the northern steppes, but concerning these the records are silent. Not until 1739 do we read of the advent at Berlin of "eighteen Turks, taken at the siege of Oczakow, of which the Czarina has made a present to the King of

Prussia." Being all very tall, the janizaries, for such they were, were sent to serve in his Majesty's own regiment of Grenadiers at Potsdam; where, owing to the King's speedy demise, they did not long have to sigh for the dearest privilege of the Turkish soldier of the time—that, namely, of returning home after a battle, if he could not succeed in running away before it.

A flatterer of the King's gigantomania even more assiduous for a time than Peter the Great, was the Emperor Charles VI.* Head of a loose federation of mutually suspicious and unfriendly States already beginning to totter towards the verge of dissolution, he lost no opportunity of conciliating this the most powerful and erratic of his lieges. As for Frederick William himself, placed as he was between many fires, and destitute of a single ally to whom he could look in time of trouble, there was no dread so strong upon him as that of being abandoned by the Emperor. In these circumstances gifts of tall men, judiciously timed, told with double effect. They assured him of the Emperor's continued friendship; they fed his master passion. Little tiffs on the score of violent or excessive recruit-

ing might now and then produce temporary coldness—might even be carried by his thin-skinned Majesty to the point of refusing to drink the customary deckel-glass to the Emperor's continued health and prosperity; but the supply of tall men in the imperial dominions was practically inexhaustible, and Count Seckendorf, that captivator of princes, was ever at hand to pour oil of colossus on the troubled waters.

Seckendorf put in an appearance at Berlin, quite casually as it were, a few days before the review of 1726. His *bon ami* Grumkow alone knew of his coming, and the King, seeing him for the first time on the parade-ground, asked Grumkow who he was.

"An Austrian noble," replied that tactful minister, "who has come to see the finest troops in the world."

"Ha! his name?"

"Count Seckendorf, your Majesty."

The King's face lit up with pleasure. Personally, the Count was a stranger to him, but between the two there had been dealings of which the King doubtless retained a lively recollection. So far back as the spring of 1723 he had forwarded to the Count, under cover of

a highly fulsome autograph letter, certain measurements "from which," said he, "you will see the size of the men of my regiment;" and by a judicious application of these measurements to the commodity so dear to his Majesty's heart, Seckendorf had already paved the way for his reception.

This unfailing means of credit, together with Grumkow's happy introduction, now stood him in good stead, and soon he was high in favour. Little by little, with infinite cunning and dexterity, he entangled the King in his meshes. The pleasing duty of bestowing the Emperor's living largesse devolved upon him as a matter of course, and clothed him with power. What obstinacy could withstand the agreeable news that Hungary was thrown open to the Prussian recruiter, or that every colonel in the Emperor's dominions had orders to pick out the tallest and handsomest man in his regiment and send him to Potsdam? What ill-humour could refuse to yield to a sumptuous repast washed down with the choicest of wines, and followed by the presentation of a herculean Tyrolese who had cost upwards of 5000 dollars to procure?—or what intrigue shake the credit of a minister whose

secret instructions directed him to ply the King with great men, and more great men, until he gained his point?

To so beneficent a being the King could refuse nothing, and ably abetted by his bosom friend Grumkow—another unscrupulous fisher in troubled waters—the wily Count cast his tempting bait in every social, domestic, or political eddy, and added to his own or his imperial master's catch at the expense of any against whom he bore a grudge.

The Treaty of Hanover, by virtue of which Frederick William had become an ally of England and the Dutch, was his first and main object of attack. A curious light is thrown upon his aggressive tactics by a letter which he indited, in October of 1726, to Prince Eugene. "Send me twenty-four of the finest, tallest, and youngest men in Hungary, Croatia, and Bohemia," he wrote. "I should be able to do more with this present here in the matter of the treaty, than with the most powerful arguments." The Prince promptly complied with his request, and the secret treaty of Wusterhausen, binding—if so unstable an ally could be bound—Frederick William to the Emperor, demonstrated beyond

question the efficacy of such arguments at Berlin.

One Gundling, a clergyman's son who did little credit to his godly training, was the Count's only formidable rival in his management of the King. Unable to get on in the world in a sensible way because of a befuddling weakness for the bottle, Gundling turned fool, and in that capacity did more mischief at the Prussian Court, where the King's whim installed him as chief jester, "than the wisest man there could boast to have done good." It was perhaps not altogether inconsistent with the King's mania for "great" men that he should have suffered his judgment to be so often warped by these two persons, one of whom was reputed to be the greatest knave, the other the greatest fool of his time.

While Seckendorf was thus adroitly severing an obnoxious alliance, Queen Sophie, the simple-minded but ambitious consort of Frederick William, was no less busily engaged behind the scenes in fostering another as little to the liking of the Count and the Court he represented. The story of the double marriage, by which it was proposed to forge a still stronger link between

the Houses of Hanover and Brandenburg, has often enough been told; but due prominence has never yet been given to the part played in that amusing family drama by the gigantomania of the Prussian King.

Than the consummation of this marriage scheme Queen Sophie had no dearer wish. If she could only see her beloved Fritz husband of Amelia of England, her darling Wilhelmine wife of the Prince of Wales, she would die content. But alas! the auguries were so inauspicious. A Swedish officer, a prisoner of war at Berlin, beguiling the tedium of his parole by the practice of astrology, averred that the life of Wilhelmine should be "one tissue of fatalities." She, who was to be sought in marriage by four crowned heads, should be espoused by none of them; while Fritz should make, not a great marriage alliance, but great acquisitions, and die Emperor. So said M. Cron, the Swedish astrologer, who had miraculously foretold the Queen's accouchement of a princess.

The King, her husband, too, was so hard to lead! Unless one plied him with big men, or with a big bumper, one could do absolutely nothing with him. To Wilhelmine's becoming Princess

of Wales he had no rooted objection except the fear of having to find her a dowry; but Fritz—the young scoundrel was already too proud to eat with a German fork, or to express himself in honest German gutturals! What he would become if he married a Princess of England—Herr Gott! it was too much to think of! Besides, there was the expense, the expense, the expense to be considered! What were they to do with an extravagant English Princess at the poverty-stricken Court of Berlin? Would she not require an establishment, and pin-money, and God alone knew what, worthy of her upstart pretensions? Who was to pay for all that? Did her Majesty say it was to come out of *his* pocket? Thousand devils! he had no gold, absolutely none! Why all this fuss, moreover, while the children were yet so young? There was abundance of time in which to get them settled, surely; and if the King of England came down with his ducats handsomely, as he could well afford to do, there was no telling what might not, through the goodness of Providence, happen in years to come.

On this precarious foundation, and in defiance of auguries, Queen Sophie hastened to build.

Her father, the first George, was no less eager for the match than she. The young people were taught to regard the matter as settled. They exchanged letters and rings, and were much in love with each other in a juvenile way. Frederick William looked cynically on, calculating his own chances rather than those of his children; and to win him over, George I., at the instigation of Queen Sophie, began to feed his passion for tall recruits.

In March 1720, some two or three years after the double marriage was first mooted, Whitworth, the British Minister at Berlin, forwarded to the Earl of Stanhope, by the Queen of Prussia's orders, the measure of the tallest man then in the Great Grenadiers—a pack-thread seven feet in length. "If it be possible," he wrote, "to find any Men near that Size, I am sure it would be the most valuable Present His Majesty could make." His Majesty was evidently of the same opinion, for as soon as might be there reached Berlin, under suitable military escort, a squad of fifteen strapping Irishmen. The reception they met with apparently justified Whitworth's prediction, for they were "very agreeably receiv'd," and the King devoted the

greater part of a week to teaching them who was master.

How many Irishmen found an asylum at Potsdam between that time and 1724 is matter of conjecture; but in the latter year there occurred an incident which goes to show that "His no less Blessed than Britannic Majesty" —as one of his Jacobite detractors, with nice equivocation, once styled him—was still alive to the necessity of currying favour with his inconstant son-in-law. In June he wrote an autograph letter to his daughter, expressly to inform her that he was sending over, by Colonel DuBourgay, "a young Irishman of an extraordinary height," who, it was hoped, would prove both an acceptable present, and a favourable introduction for that newly-appointed minister. Mon-Bijou rejoiced at the tidings. The Queen could not refrain from speaking of her father's condescension with visible delight and pride. The tall Hibernian won the admiration of every beholder, the King included; and DuBourgay, after being *fêted* and made much of at Berlin, was carried to Brandenburg, in defiance of his gout, to witness the manœuvres of the giant guards who were quartered there. For

a time the King had one of his "fits of fondness" for England strong upon him, and the hopes of the match-making Queen rose to the highest pitch.

Rose, only to fall again to the lowest depths of despair within a twelvemonth. Four tall soldiers in one of the Hanoverian regiments were the innocent cause of this contretemps. Rumour of their fine stature reaching Frederick William, he set his heart upon having them for his own. The men themselves were willing enough to enter his service, and their Colonel, for reasons unknown, was not averse from the transfer. The Queen had long before obtained her father's permission to draw a certain number of recruits from Hanover every year, but Milady Arlington, who cherished strong anti-Prussian sympathies in the matter of the double match, had tampered with the arrangement, and of late the returns from that quarter had been few and far between. Nettled by this neglect, and instigated by Grumkow, who was perhaps a better Anglophobe than statesman, Frederick William set his enrollers to work in Hanover with more than neighbourly zeal. This being the case, the Queen thought it prudent to disabuse her father's

mind of any prejudices with which Milady Arlington and the playful recruiter might have inspired it. She accordingly wrote a letter to that end, and persuaded docile old DuBourgay to do the same. To her dismay the overture was met with stolid silence.

She then changed her tactics and began to complain. "Where was her beloved father's former *tendresse* for her? where his little *ménagements* for her husband? Enemies laid hold with eagerness upon trifles such as these to confirm the King of Prussia in opinions which already had too much weight with him. They hinted, and hinted with seeming truth, that the King of England had no regard for him or anything he desired. He was so easily won over, too, if only one studied his foibles a little. There was Count Rothenburg, now; he got whatever he wanted, in return merely for a few tall fellows from France! If his Majesty could spare the big Germans, or get half-a-dozen giants raised in his British dominions, it would have incalculable influence on whatever he had to propose at Berlin. She need say nothing of the reasons which induced her to make this request, since they were already very well known to his Majesty."

But Milady and the Prussian recruiter had played their part only too well, and upon his Majesty the pertinacious pleading of the sorely harassed Queen was thrown away. He preserved his stolid silence, the tall Germans remained in Hanover, no giants were forthcoming from England, and Holtzendorf, whom, as surgeon to the Tall Grenadiers, it was proposed that his Britannic Majesty should bribe because of his alleged influence with the Prussian King, was made the richer by never a penny. Disgusted beyond measure by Frederick William's vacillating policy, and smarting under the violences committed by Prussian recruiters in his Electoral dominions, George I. would court no longer the petty kingling who was never in the same mind two days together, pander no more to a passion which knew neither bounds nor boundaries.

The Queen's pertinacity, however, equalled her solicitude for the double match, and some two years later she reiterated her request for the tall Hanoverians—this time with better success. Her brother, the second George, reluctantly yielded, and the big Germans eventually filled the places which had so long awaited

them in the majestic ranks of the Potsdam Guard. But Count Seckendorf and his gigantic heydukes were now at the height of their influence with the Prussian King, and the grudging favour came too late to retrieve the situation. In response to the Queen's piteous pleadings, one other heroic attempt was indeed made to resurrect the double marriage from the grave to which the silent contempt of George I. had consigned it, but the attempt proved futile. Frederick William could never forgive the slight put upon his darling hobby.

To the foreign ministers at Berlin, each of them with his political axe to grind, there was absolutely no handle available save that of playing the pimp to a passion which a King of England could afford to scout. Once upon a time his Majesty of Prussia had been accessible to all, without fear or favour. Meeting a poor woman on the parade-ground, the first year of his reign, he not only lent a sympathetic ear to her tale of woe, but established an evanescent reputation for generosity by handing one of his lackeys four florins to give to her. The money cost the lackey a severe beating, for he pocketed the greater part of it, and the King, observing

the dishonest act, drove him off the ground with his stick. Now, barring only the stick, all was changed. Illustrious personages had established a precedent, the precedent had created a necessity, and unless approached with his favourite toy in hand, the King fumed or sulked like a spoilt child. Hence the foreign ephemera of the Court—the Rothenburgs and DuBourgays, the Golovkins and Flemmings, the Whitworths, the Manteuffels, and the Meyers—taking each a leaf out of Seckendorf's book, adopted this ready and only means of obtaining audience of the King, of appeasing his resentments, of worming themselves into his confidence, or of wheedling out of him the favours they desired.

Outside this cringing company of diplomats there circled about the Recruiter King a swarm of home and foreign sycophants eager to extract the sweets of favour from attenuated flesh and bones. Foremost amongst these, in point of time if not of eminence, may be mentioned the Saxon Cabinet Minister Wackerbarth, who, foreseeing the possible advantages of standing well with so near a neighbour, in 1715 despatched to Berlin a recognition of his Prussian Majesty's birthday, August 14, no less flattering than unique,

since it consisted of a large bundle of tobacco leaves, two handsome Turkish pipes, and a bagful of fragrant Latakia, all committed to the hands of a seven-foot messenger, with a missive imploring the King's gracious acceptance of these trifles and "the Cupid who bore them."

An assiduous follower in Wackerbarth's footsteps was the well-known Saxon Field-Marshal and State Minister, Count von Flemming, who—to reserve his more mercenary dealings for a future chapter—in the year following the advent at Berlin of the above-mentioned "Cupid," resolved to make the King a present of six tall fellows, and directed Manteuffel, the Saxon Resident at Frederick William's Court, to tell him so. The audience in which that gentleman announced the gift was amusing.

Approaching his agreeable task with all the hyperbolic politeness of one well used to converse with kings, and, it may be suspected, not without an eye to the humour of his mission, he informed his Majesty that Count Flemming craved permission to lay himself at the royal feet and to solicit a favour.

"What is it now?" demanded the King suspiciously.

"Your Majesty has several very tall fellows——"

"Blood and wounds!" cried the King, with every manifestation of alarm, "I knew he wanted to get one off!"

"No, no, your Majesty," said the Envoy hastily, "the Count merely wishes to offer three or four more."

The King on hearing this was delighted beyond expression, and embraced Manteuffel repeatedly in the most effusive and affectionate manner, little suspecting that the astute Envoy, resolved to be less prodigal than the Count, was holding in reserve against future emergencies two of the tallest men in his gift.

The reserve, it is to be feared, was speedily exhausted, for when, a few years later, Count Flemming wished to "pave the way for his reception" at the Prussian Court, he was obliged to "send thither three tall men," and to promise "ten more."

On the outermost edge of this outer circle of sycophants, looking Potsdam-wards with longing eyes, hovered another Field-Marshal, Count Münnich of the Russian service. Being anxious to come from Dantzic, where he held the far

from desirable post of commandant, to win the King's favour by a personal interview, he wrote asking Count Seckendorf how he could best succeed in achieving his end. "To make your Excellency's arrival pleasing to the King," the Count replied with that engaging frankness of which he was sometimes guilty, "it is absolutely necessary that you come not alone, but with at least four tall men as a present for the King's Majesty. You can obtain them either where you are, or in Poland, where they are to be had in plenty, and may easily be got away. It is all one to the King of what nationality these creatures may be, so long as they are tall and well set-up."

With so many notable instances of the value of "these creatures" before their eyes, the King's own ministers had no option but to sail with the only favourable wind that blew. Degenfeld, returning from a political mission, "paid his court that way" through a couple of tall men whom he had inveigled over from England. So, too, did Borcke the younger, who in his high capacity of Prussian Minister at the Court of King George, achieved notoriety—as we shall have more than one occasion to remember in

the course of this narrative—by the "unworthy trade of debauching and seducing" his Britannic Majesty's subjects for similar ends; while Chancellor Grumkow himself, first Minister of State though he was, owned with shame that "he was obliged to play the Pyrate as well as others, insomuch that was the Emperor's first Kettle-Drummer a Man fit for his purpose, he would steal him away if he was within his reach."

Than the lot of the Prussian army officers in this respect nothing could well have been more pitiable. Let the difficulty and expense of gratifying the King's whim be what it might, they "could not be sure of their bread" unless able to show a goodly number of tall recruits at every review. "The King has declared," General Forcade once wrote, in imploring Count Flemming to help him make up his tale of tall men, "that the officer who has none shall be broken like glass!" Nay, an even severer punishment than cashiering awaited him who was guilty of this heinous sin of omission; for if the King did not find the requisite ornaments of the right wing in sufficient numbers, or of a size to please his fastidious taste, immurement in Spandau was the possible fate of the defaulter.

Such was the Nemesis that in 1739 overtook a major, whose glaring remissness in this respect singled him out for the King's displeasure. He was committed to the dread fortress for six years.

To escape such disgrace and the consequent ruin it entailed upon them, officers were not only obliged, like greater men, to have recourse to practices utterly inconsistent with every dictate of honour and self-respect, but also to make pecuniary sacrifices which only too often brought them to the very brink of the ruin they sought to avoid. In a sense, it is true, they cast their bread upon the waters, for sooner or later, after few days or many, a run of recruiting luck would surely put them in pocket again; but tall men did not grow like mushrooms, and for the time being the pinch of the shoe was excruciating. One captain at Magdeburg was obliged to give 4000 dollars and a substantial monthly pension in exchange for the only make-shift upon whom he could lay hands—the seventeen-year old, abnormally overgrown son of an Austrian gentleman, who was not above selling the youthful prodigy into a state worse than slavery for such a consideration.

The loss of one of these expensive parade ornaments was a serious blow to the purveyor. A tall fugleman once got drunk at an inn, and in this state staggered into the Spree through the defective railings of a bridge. He was drowned, and as he was a foreigner, who represented an outlay of 1500 dollars, his captain, well aware that a king who was so fond of live giants would give not a stiver for a dead one, however tall, hit upon an ingenious method of getting his money back. Appealing to his Majesty, he enlarged in pathetic terms upon the deceased's phenomenal inches, and prayed that the official responsible for the care of the bridge, and hence for the loss of the giant, should be made to suffer for his negligence. The King's heart was touched. Tears of regret for the dead "long fellow" mingled with the ink of the marginal in which he summarily ordered the official to make good the captain's loss, and to have a corporal and six privates quartered on him until he paid up. But this, alas for the humour of our story! was an exceptional case. Seldom indeed were the recruiting burdens of officers thus lightened; and so heavily did those burdens tell upon their pockets, so bitterly upon

their spirits, they were fain to cry, both great and small: "Oh for a war, to cure our cruel task-master of his fatal passion for tall men!"

But if the situation of officers in general was bad, that of the Prince Royal, first as Colonel of the Brandenburg section of Great Grenadiers, next as commander of the regiment stationed at Ruppin, was infinitely worse. Thanking his father, as a lad, for an addition to his cadet corps, he expressed a hope that the new recruit might grow sufficiently to allow of his admission, at some future day, to that famous regiment in which only giants were enrolled. How fervently in after years, when "recruiting was the burthen he groaned under," must he have echoed that wish!

"The practice," he declared to Guy-Dickens in 1739, "pressed upon him with intolerable weight. It was all very well to expostulate with him about the money he threw away on it, all very well to say there was no reason why he should be at greater expense on that account than any other colonel in the service. Reasoning must cease when recruits were concerned. He had begun to pay his court that way after his disgrace, and it was the only way he had to procure him a quiet life."

The calm of the Prince's existence, however, during the period to which he was wont to refer in after and more stormy years as the "time of his tranquillity," was not wholly undisturbed. Fine recruits might appease an irascible king and prevent ugly scenes at inspection, but meantime that commonplace arbiter of peaceful domesticity, the creditor, had by some means or other to be staved off. There was little to choose, perhaps, between his father's anger and an avalanche of bills which an allowance truly Frederician in its meagreness rendered it impossible to meet. But a golden day was coming, when the beggar should be master of the miser's hoard, and on this the Prince traded, living largely on credit, and spending nearly every penny of his slender income, of the Emperor's equally slender advances—2500 crowns, as near as may be estimated, freely given and "not to be required again"—and of the loans obtained from Biron, Duke of Courland, on the procuration or purchase of tall men. Once he succeeded in touching the royal heart and pocket by his show of fine recruits.

"I love thee, Fritz," hiccoughed his father, after the generous dinner which followed, "for

I perceive a Frederick William in thee after all. Ask of me what thou wilt——"

"I desire nothing of my Most All-Gracious Lord-Father," interrupted the Prince, who knew how to appraise such protestations, "but his continued love and favour."

"Good!" said the King. "I will give thee 100,000 crowns as an earnest of it."

But in his sober moments he first forgot and then regretted the promise, payment was long deferred, the gift finally dwindled to 70,000 crowns. Harassed beyond endurance by the demands of petty tradesmen, and driven to the utmost straits for a tittle of the treasure with which his father's coffers threatened to burst but did not, the Prince demeaned himself by an act for which he afterwards had reason to blush with shame. He helped himself to the contents of the regimental recruiting chest.

The recruiting chest—or, more comprehensively, the recruiting fund—was an institution of Frederick William's own. Frederick I. had had a marine fund; Frederick William, diverting it into the insatiable channel of his mania, applied it chiefly to the maintenance of his so-called body-guard, though in a secondary sense

it met general deficiencies in the ranks at large when conscription, gift and theft failed to make them good. He sold his African colonies to the Dutch for 1000 ducats, and gave the proceeds to the recruiting fund. No Jew could marry unless able to show a receipt for money paid into the recruiting fund. After the reviews it was customary to grant leave to forty men or more of each company, whose pay while absent went into the recruiting fund. Most offices under the crown were sold to the highest bidder, the fees being allotted to the recruiting fund. Before receiving a title one was obliged to say how much he would contribute to the recruiting fund. Concerning officials guilty of irregular practices the King's common dictum was: "He must come to terms with the recruiting fund." The "Order of Generosity" itself was sold—the transaction being duly chronicled in the royal diary, "Caught another hare to-day"—and the proceeds handed over to the recruiting fund. Ladies suspected of marriage infidelity found costly absolution in the recruiting fund. One Colonel Wreech, who swore with uplifted hand to the Councillors of Custrin that they were all blackguards, remembered the recruiting

fund and suffered no other unpleasantness from his plain speaking. Every regiment had its quota of the recruiting fund, deposited in its own recruiting chest, and no commanding officer knew at what moment he might be called upon by the King to produce that chest for examination.

It was of the money thus entrusted to his keeping that the Prince Royal, in an evil moment, was driven to make personal use, and —he could not repay the loan. In this serious predicament, when his dearly purchased credit with the King seemed hopelessly at stake, and disgrace inevitable, there came a timely and secret offer of assistance from George II. Of this the Prince gladly availed himself, and until his father's death made him master of his hoarded riches, the demands of the Ruppin "student" upon his royal cousin's "books"—as the money and its borrower were termed in despatches—continued to be both frequent and heavy. By this indirect means alone, with the single exception already noticed, did George II. contribute to the supply of tall men at Potsdam. Like M. de la Chétardie, he deemed it better policy to minister to the wants of a coming, than to the mania of a departing, king.

For la Chétardie put perhaps the most extreme interpretation upon a precedent to which, as we have seen, all his diplomatic brethren at Berlin conformed in a greater or less degree—that is to say, he extended it to the Prince Royal, in a manner peculiarly French. When Frederick William lay sick unto death, as it was believed, in the autumn of 1734, the minister of his Most Christian Majesty, anticipating Prince Frederick's speedy accession to power, obtained from Paris a "fine" recruit of a description well known at the Court of Madame the Pompadour, but alarmingly new to the prudish Court of Berlin—a recruit who boasted "a little round face, a pair of black eyes, a rosy cheek, and 'teeth like a young flock from the clear brook recent.'"

"La Chétardie," says Thomas Robinson of Vienna, who is responsible for the story, "has her in his hands, ready primed and cocked, and God knows but she may have already given fire!"

CHAPTER III

THE ROYAL SPORT OF MAN-HUNTING

THE offerings with which it was sought to appease the "Crowned Ogre"—to give Frederick William the posthumous title conferred upon him by Voltaire—served only to create an appetite for victims of larger growth. In lands that apparently teemed with men of mighty stature, what acquisitions might not yet be possible! Somewhere, whether hidden away in some remote corner of Europe or near at hand, there surely existed the Ideal Giant, who should overtop the colossal specimens he already had, by who could say how many spans? and in furtherance of his quest for this Brobdingnagian recruit, whose breath he already felt in fancy upon his very cheek, Frederick William did not scruple to beg like a mendicant, to barter like a huckster, to rob like a brigand, and to exact his meed of flesh, from whomsoever he could, with all the merciless insist-

ence, and infinitely less than the justice, of a Shylock.

The most amusing instance—apart from its distressing sequel—of his importunity, as of his success in begging, is that related in connection with his visit to the King of Poland in 1730, when a grand review was held at Dresden in honour of the event. The Saxon army was at that time scarcely in a condition to acquit itself to the satisfaction of "the first drill-sergeant in Europe," for its ranks were filled with raw recruits and untrained horses, got together for the occasion—defects to which his Polish Majesty, being temporarily in pocket, sought to blind his exacting guest by a display so lavish as almost to transform the scene into a second Field of the Cloth of Gold. But there was one feature of the show to which no glamour could render the argus-eyed monarch oblivious, and that was the presence in the ranks of some superb specimens of the gigantesque.

For King August, it must here be premised, had been amongst the first of many to catch the complaint of his Prussian neighbour, and from the hamlets of Poland and Saxony, from garri-

sons and the retinues of the nobility, there had been gathered in, some years previous to this review, a little harvest of big men who were formed into a regiment—the celebrated Rutowski Grenadiers—which was considered at Dresden to be a worthy rival of the King of Prussia's own. In order to obtain something extra good against the forthcoming visit, however, his Polish Majesty had despatched a couple of officers to Venice, early in 1730, with instructions to see what materials could be found in the Dalmatian provinces, which, he fancied, might not yet have been gleaned of all their tall men by the busy Prussian recruiter. But that ubiquitous traveller—in this respect the Yankee of his time—was already in the field, and sought by every possible means to foil the dangerous competition of the Saxons, who nevertheless succeeded in securing twenty-five Morlachs of the tallest breed, at the ridiculously low figure of thirty zecchins a head. To get these gentry away, however, was another matter, for the farther they travelled from home the more they desired to return to it. At Trieste their aversion to deportation took a new and unlooked-for turn. The giants were

a half-naked lot, resembling desperadoes more than soldiers, and the Saxon officers, being ashamed to pass through Germany with them in charge, bought a quantity of cheap cloth and clad the tatterdemalion band—in yellow! The galley-slave colour was little to the taste of the beggarly Morlachs, who not only clamoured loudly for blue and red, but swore they would not budge a step until they got it; and not until they were thus gaily tricked out did they continue their journey to Dresden, where they arrived just in time to join the Rutowski ranks against the review.

The sight of the Dalmatian giants inspired the Potsdam ogre with keen avidity. So, too, did a gigantic northerner—an eight-footer—whom the King of Sweden had presented to his Polish Majesty, and who, in company with a tiny Moorish dwarf, drove the four-horse chariot which carried the monster regimental drum. He began to pester the King of Poland for them. His determination to have them passed unscathed through a week's excruciating gout, survived the deadly round of eating, drinking and hunting with which his visit was rounded out, and turned up, triumphant and a

thousand-fold more insistent, in the very moment of the parting embrace. His Polish Majesty's repeated refusal to enter into closer relations with the Emperor and himself, he acquiesced in with scarce a murmur—it was but an insignificant political detail; but in the vital matter of the tall men he would take absolutely no denial. Unable to withstand his importunity, the King of Poland, sorely against his will, presented him with twenty-four of the tallest, to the inexpressible grief of the poor fellows themselves, who had already heard much more than they desired to know of the cruel lot in store for them.

Amongst the number thus summarily handed over to the dreaded taskmaster there was one man who towered head and shoulders above his giant fellows. It was the Swedish waggoner. The King not unreasonably expected great things of so great a man, but in this he was sorely disappointed. Drill and bully and beat as he might, he could make no impression on the big Swede, and in a paroxysm of rage he drove him out of the Potsdam gates. The poor fellow's after fate was deplorable. Too tall to make a living by ordinary means, and too stupid to

make a Grenadier, he died of poverty in the streets of Berlin.

The review of 1730 was by no means the first or only occasion on which the King's superb mendicity made itself felt beyond the Saxon border. Long before that event his spies had furnished him with a complete "List of the great men to be found in Saxony," and at frequent intervals Count Flemming was surprised—for he had comparatively little idea how rich a vein of giants Saxony could boast—by a fulsome letter begging a parcel of these highly desirable chattels.

To these appeals the Count did not always respond with that openness of hand so gratifying to the kingly suppliant when it was not expected of himself. He could, in fact, drive as hard a bargain as the King, and hence there grew up between the two a regular system of human barter, in which the Count greedily took all he could get, and the King grudgingly parted with as little as he could help. At one time it was a cash transaction—a batch of four long men for 5000 dollars; at another, an even swap—that "handsome tall fellow, Andreas Hessen of Krieger's regiment," who "did not

cost much," for a famous bassoonist whom the Count coveted for his private band, and with whom his Majesty parted the more willingly because he was a prime favourite with Queen Sophie. The Count's sharpness, however, was not always a match for the King's. On one occasion he collected a dozen men suitable for the third grade of Tall Grenadiers, and in accordance with the prescribed, though by no means generally observed, etiquette of such transactions, forwarded them to Potsdam fully armed and equipped, at the same time letting fall a hint of the most pointed kind, to the effect that a suitable return, in the shape of statuary or some such unconsidered trifles from the Berlin Museum, would not be unacceptable at Dresden, provided that no publicity was given to this bartering of still life for real. The King snapped at the men, but, having got them, he declined to take the hint.

Still, it was not wholly thrown away upon him, for some time after, accidentally meeting Suhm, the Saxon Resident, in the street, his Majesty button-holed him and graciously intimated his willingness to swap his museum, his cabinet of medals, and possibly his library of

rare books to boot, for stalwart Saxons. Suhm, being well aware that certain *objets de vertu* in the King's possession were much coveted at Dresden, jumped at the chance of thus acquiring them. Deceived by the apparent straightforwardness of the offer, he went through the entire collection *seriatim*, with never a suspicion that the King was playing the Jew until it came to appraising his selection, when the scales were rudely torn from his eyes. For some fifteen *articles de luxe* his Majesty, while offering the merest trifle per head for the tallest recruits, asked the modest sum of half-a-million of dollars! The whites of Suhm's eyes went up in horror of such extortionate demands, and no business was done in long Saxons on that occasion.

A story of how the King once swapped a horse for tall recruits is too circumstantial and characteristic to be other than true. The horse was a Spanish stallion of purest breed, for which Frederick I. had paid a large sum, but which did not reach Berlin until after his death. The splendid animal excited the admiration and envy of all who were privileged to behold it, and amongst those whose fancy was thus smitten was the von Wackerbarth of seven-foot "Cupid"

fame, who at that time represented Saxony at the Prussian Court. Love of a horse, like a cough, cannot be hid, and the King, seeing how the case stood with the Saxon Envoy, expressed his readiness to let him have the stallion at a bargain—for the trifling consideration of twenty-four tall fellows, in fact; whereupon Wackerbarth offered half the number, which the King refused. After the deal had been going on for some time with but little prospect of a bargain being struck, the King, at a dinner where all had imbibed pretty freely, brought the matter up in the presence of the Duke of Würtemburg, the Prince of Anhalt, and other distinguished guests, by turning to the envoy and hiccoughing gravely:

"Come! to oblige you, Wackerbarth, I'll knock off four tall fellows; but you shan't have the horse a head cheaper."

"Well, I don't know," replied Wackerbarth dubiously. "Second thoughts are best, and your Majesty has given me so much time for reflection, I am more inclined to back down altogether than to climb to your figure. The fact of the matter is, my conscience is rather uneasy."

"How's that?" said the King.

"Why, you see, these stallions of mine are baptized, and your Majesty's isn't."

"But he ought to be all right in that respect," said the King, with a twinkle of malice for Wackerbarth in his eye. "He comes from a country where good Catholics are easily made, they say."

"Ah! So he does," replied the Envoy dryly. "Perhaps we may be able to get over the difficulty after all—if your Majesty will take the twelve grenadiers."

"What the devil, your Majesty!" cried Anhalt, striking into the conversation at this point, "you are never going to swap the Spaniard for twelve beggarly grenadiers! Why, I'll give you thirty out of hand, and all of the top height at that."

The King looked hard at Wackerbarth. "If he does not make up his mind pretty soon," said he, "I shall accept your offer, Prince."

"Well, as for that," replied Wackerbarth, who suspected Anhalt of "standing in" with the King, "I should be sorry to disoblige two such illustrious personages as your Majesty and the Prince, so we'll say nothing more about it."

"Then I take you, Anhalt," said the King, amid the laughter of the table.

But sizable recruits were not always to be so easily come at as in this instance, and when this was the case the King resorted to more questionable means of procuring them. In his own dominions—as he once bluntly told Count Seckendorf when that minister, of all men, had been saddled by his Court with the hopeless task of "curing his Prussian Majesty of his madness in enlisting"—"he could do as he liked." The light in which he regarded home cases of "lifting" is admirably brought out by a retort he once made, when some members of the University of Halle complained of the treatment received by a tall law student, who had been set upon one evening in the open street of that town, thrown into a cart, and trundled away to barracks. "No fuss!" said the despot, "he is my subject."

So little did "fuss" avail in cases of this description, and of such common occurrence were the cases themselves, that it became practically impossible for any but students of the lowest stature—dwarfs, in short—to complete the University course; and the fate of

these unfortunates was, as we have already seen, meted out in even sterner measure to most other classes. A letter once reached the King, in which the writer, appealing to his Majesty's religious sentiments, attempted, by quoting Exodus xxi. 16 and Deuteronomy xxiv. 7, to prove that he had no right to steal his own subjects. The King sought refuge in 1 Samuel viii. 16, which, he declared, empowered him to take "the goodliest young men, *and asses*."

Had he been content to press his prerogative no further than this within his dominions, abundant excuse could perhaps be found for its arbitrary exercise; but unfortunately for his memory, he pushed it to far more serious lengths. Not only did he claim conscriptive rights over his own subjects, he extended that claim, contrary to principles of international law even then very generally acknowledged, to such of his neighbours' subjects as happened to cross his borders. "If they don't want to be exposed to accidents," he observed to Seckendorf, with significant tartness, on the occasion above alluded to, "let them keep out of my country."

It was doubtless on such grounds as these that certain of the King's officers, in the course

of their daily task of verifying the old saw, "Like master, like man," once sought to make a Great Grenadier of that gigantic Austrian nobleman, Baron von Bentenrieder. Journeying by easy stages to the Court of George I., with his credentials as Emperor's Ambassador tucked snugly away in his pocket, the Baron, who was considered to be the tallest of men, certainly merited the distinction of tallest of diplomatists. Tallest, but not wisest. Near Halberstadt—a region of ill repute for rough roads and rougher recruiters—his coach broke down, and his Excellency, wishing to stretch his long legs, left the carriage to be brought forward by his servants and proceeded on foot. At the town gate he was challenged by a sentry.

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"The Emperor's Botschafter," replied the tall stranger.

The officer of the guard happened to be a Pomeranian, and in his mother tongue the big word meant merely a courier, not an ambassador. "Courier, eh?" thought he. "Not too great a dandy to make a Prussian soldier, anyhow." So he turned out the guard and arrested him.

Entering into the humour of the thing, the Baron allowed himself to be led away to the house of the commandant, who, at sight of so promising a recruit, went into ecstasies.

"A perfect god-send! How high does he stand? Ha! so much? Not higher, though, than I shall stand with the King!"

In the midst of these self-gratulations up came one of Bentenrieder's servants.

"Your Excellency," he began, when the commandant, suddenly perceiving that he had put his foot in it, interrupted him with an exclamation of alarm.

"What!" cried he. "It is surely not the Ambassador of whose coming——"

"It is," said the Baron; "and when next he comes this way, see that you are not in such a hurry to press your acquaintance upon him."

With that he walked away, laughing heartily at the escapade—as well he might, since it was not given to every man to escape so easily from the toils. Baron Demerath, sometime Imperial Resident at Berlin, once had in his employ a tall Viennese cook, whom he discharged at his own request. Aware of the risk the man ran on account of his inches, the Baron not only pro-

vided him with the Imperial passport, but placed his own horses at his disposal, and delegated one of his servants to see him safely over the Saxon frontier. But the unfortunate *chef* was not destined to set foot on Saxon soil for many a year. The Nemesis which sooner or later overtook all tall men in Prussia, was on his track. Before he had proceeded many miles, he was pounced upon by a party of recruiters, who, making light of his treble safe-conduct, whisked him off to Potsdam.

Against this gross violation of the law of nations the Baron immediately entered a spirited protest. The Prussian Ministers listened with uplifted brows, the King scowled. They were very sorry for the "accident," but release the cook they could not; and they only hoped that Monsieur le Baron "would not make any difference between the two Courts for so trifling a matter!" The cook remained at Potsdam, a notorious addition to an already notorious regiment.

Nor was this all. If a person was tall, he had to take equal care how he travelled in those days, whether in Prussian dominions, or out of them, for in quest of his Ideal Giant Frederick

William stopped at nothing. Boundaries vanished before him, Europe became his private hunting-ground. A lawless grotesque of a king at his best, in no respect did he believe himself to be so superior to all law, whether human or divine, as in this; and right roundly did he act up to his belief. Expense itself could not deter him, greatest miser of his time though he was, from his darling pursuit; while considerations of international right, of individual liberty, of personal honour, weighed light as air when placed in the balance over against his ideal. He "had a mortgage on all the tall fellows in Europe," and whensoever, or wheresoever, the opportunity presented itself, he promptly foreclosed the mortgage and took the man.

Instances of his summary enforcement of so audacious a conception of the divine right of kings are almost numberless. The musty correspondence of our contemporaneous national representatives at Berlin, Vienna, and elsewhere, may fairly be said to abound in them. So, too, do those amusing if not wholly trustworthy anecdotists and annalists who wrote during, or shortly after, the reign of this most eccentric of kings. A few of the more characteristic of

these may here be given, because of the curious light they shed on our royal Man-hunter's mania and methods.

His utter unscrupulousness when tall men were concerned, is well illustrated by an order which he sent in 1731 to a lieutenant who was in his service at the Hague. It was couched in the following precise terms: "I have promised the Russian Empress to send her, for six years' service, one master swordsmith with a hammerer, one master hardener with a labourer, one polisher with a labourer, and one scythesmith with a labourer. These people you must do your best to procure at the Hague. Persuade them with gifts if possible; but if they will not engage themselves, you must carry them off by force, and send them from garrison to garrison under military escort." There was at the Hague, it should be explained, a cutlery factory manned with first-rate English operatives, and it was on these the King had his eye. As he had foreseen, no offers of money could induce them to exchange the certain competence they enjoyed, for the uncertainty attending the long journey to Russia and their subsequent treatment there. They were accordingly abducted,

and with them the Empress Anne founded her celebrated sword factory at Tula. It may indeed be urged that they were not kidnapped because of their height, or with a view to making grenadiers. But wait! The Empress had solicited this favour of the King, holding out as a bait the tempting offer of an equal number of tall Russians; and, the coveted workmen once secured, she fulfilled her promise to the letter, to the unbounded delight of the royal trepanner.

In the course of the following year he received an offer of a somewhat less tempting nature, but with which he nevertheless closed as greedily. "I have seen in the recruiting regulations," the Prince Royal wrote from Ruppin, "that when officers know of tall fellows above six feet, who are not to be had by fair means, they are to give information as to whether, and how, they may be secured. Not far from Perlberg, in Mecklenburg, there is a shepherd who is said to be quite six feet four. He is not to be had by fair means, but when herding his sheep he is alone in the field, and could be got. He is the man the Hussars were once sent after. I wish therefore to inquire whether my Most All-Gracious Lord-Father commands that he shall be taken.

I will see that it is done without any fuss." The King issued orders for the shepherd's immediate apprehension.

Slinking about under cover of the dykes of Holland, the King's recruiting emissaries once espied a mountainous Dutch carrier, jogging stolidly on in his lumbering waggon. They pounced down upon him, and leaving the waggon and horses to take care of themselves, marched him off in their midst to the nearest inn, where, finding that he stubbornly resisted all their inducements to swear allegiance to their master, they "roasted him behind a hot, burning stove," at the point of the bayonet, until he consented to become a grenadier.

A thread of fine pathos frequently weaves itself into the texture of these coarse outrages. On one occasion a detachment of mounted troops made a raid into the Bishop of Osnabrück's country, and forcibly carried off a tall man who lived there. The poor fellow's father tried to rescue him, and was left dead on the scene of his ill-advised attempt. At another time they were "lifting" a tall shepherd across the Anhalt-Cöthen border, when he gave his captors the slip, and made a desperate spurt for

liberty. The cornet in command rode after him, and shot him dead in his tracks.

But the story of the Jülich carpenter far surpasses these in pathetic interest. The King at one time had in his service a certain Hompesch who, as a reward for playing the recruiter with energy and success, was created a lieutenant-colonel. One day, in the town of Jülich, he came across a carpenter of commanding figure. To secure so desirable a prize, Hompesch favoured him with an order for a chest, which should be exactly as long as its builder—say eight feet. When it was finished the customer began to quibble about its length, and the carpenter, to set all doubts at rest, unsuspiciously stepped into the box and stretched himself out on the bottom. "Ah! it's all right, I see," said Hompesch; and clapping down the lid, he secured it with a piece of rope. With the assistance of a brace of Prussian recruiters in disguise, the chest was that night carried out of the town; but when the lid was raised, the poor carpenter was discovered as stiff and lifeless as the boards which enclosed him.

It mattered as little to these ruffians as to their master who or what their victim might

be, provided only, to repeat the words of Seckendorf, he was "tall and well set-up." "They enrolled whom they could," declares Pöllnitz, "without regard to rank or birth," now condescending to men of low degree, again aspiring to the rich and great. There was, for instance, that young Courlander of affluent and influential family, who in his nineteenth year set out for Germany to complete his studies. Before he had proceeded many stages on his journey, however, his great height—for they grew many a Colossus up Courland way—attracted the notice of a Prussian officer, on whom the King had bestowed "a pass to go a-hunting." This individual joined the young man in his travels, and by pretending great interest in him, induced him to make a *détour* to Berlin, with the avowed object of seeing the sights. On their arrival there they entered a tavern to drink the King's health, when up came a picket and took the tall recruit, as his *compagnon de voyage* swore he was, in charge, and in a few hours' time he found himself attired in the uniform of a Great Grenadier. The King was so captivated by his height and good looks, that he made him a "non-com." within

a year, and an ensign in three. The Courlander thought himself a lucky man.

Another recruit, who came from the south, and who could boast of rank as well as inches, was less lucky, as luck went at Potsdam, since he attained to the uniform but fell short of the commission. His story is rather a curious one. A member of the Prussian recruiting fraternity, temporarily domiciled at Genoa, obtained an introduction to the Marquis de Brezé, and so got to be on intimate terms with his son, the Chevalier d'Argentera, who was exceptionally tall. The officer could talk of nothing but the grand Prussian army, and the young noble, thinking to see for himself what inducements it offered in the way of a military career, finally accompanied him to Berlin. For months his family heard no news of him, and in their anxiety they wrote to Wackerbarth, who, after prolonged search, discovered the missing man—in the Berlin guard-house! He had been locked up all this time, it appeared, because of a refusal to enter the King's body-guard, and in order "to break his temper." Wackerbarth was able to offer the unhappy parents but sorry consolation. "It seems to me," said he, "that he

will have about as much chance of escape as the other foreign Marquises, Counts and Barons who have been coaxed hither by great promises, and were after all put in the ranks."

There can be no question but that Wackerbarth, in his solicitude for the feelings of the Chevalier's people, was guilty of a delicate exaggeration. Had he insinuated, however, that the ranks of the Great Grenadiers could show a plentiful sprinkling of privates who had once been cowled, or worn the cloth, he would have been well within the truth, since the King's lack of respect for sectaries, monks and other custodians of the priestly office with whom he did not agree, was even more notorious than his disregard of rank and birth. The tenets of the Mennonites, who held the shedding of human blood to be a deadly sin, and preached the eternal damnation of all who followed that sanguinary calling, gave him mortal offence. It was not so much that they conflicted with his theology—they tended, rather, to thwart his ruling passion. He therefore fulminated an edict against the objectionable sect, straitly charging every member of it to quit his dominions, bag and baggage, within three months.

It was with no view to the conversion of these black sheep, therefore, that he sent for Pastor Baumgarten from Halle. Baumgarten was reported to be a Socinian, denying the Divinity and Atonement of Christ. "Aha!" argued the orthodox King, "here's a daring fellow for you. A man bold enough to attack the very foundations of Christianity must surely be of heroic build." He accordingly summoned the preacher into his presence, confident of finding in him the promise of a Great Grenadier; but when, instead of the giant he expected to see, there appeared a frail, undersized man, he was amazed. "Go back!" he cried. "In God's name go back and keep up your preaching. You will never do any harm."

Like Pastor Baumgarten, the unfortunate Mennonites were probably not of a stature to excite the King's cupidity, else would they hardly have escaped as lightly as they did. Or it may be that he had already converted the tallest members of the Anabaptist flock to his views of election. But with the Catholics of Poland the case was different. They had plenty of men amongst them as great in obnoxious theology as in stature, and since the King bore them a

standing grudge for their relentless persecution of the Lutherans, he stole away their tonsured shepherds whenever he could do it with impunity, and forced them to exchange the monkish cowl for the grenadier's *chapeau*. There were many Polish priests in the regiment at Potsdam, and at least two others hailed from Roman monasteries. But perhaps the most noteworthy representative of the "divinity" that did hedge the King, was a tall priest belonging to the Italian Tyrol, and kidnapped, so it is said, whilst in the very act of reading mass. According to Thiébault he was none other than the celebrated Abbé Bastiani, whom Frederick the Great afterwards created a Canon.

Turning now from Frederick William's begging, bartering and stealing proclivities, there remains only to be considered that phase of his assiduous hunt for the Ideal Giant which presents him in the character of a Shylock-like exactor who, demurring at the pound of flesh accorded him of grace, clamoured loudly for the whole carcase.

At home he could of course "do as he liked" —as the King of Denmark learnt, when obliged to purchase the extradition of a murderer who had sought refuge in Prussia, with twelve tall

grenadiers; as Ferrari, an official at Cottbus, learnt when the King adorned his report on the hardness of the times and the consequent sufferings of the peasantry, with the cold-blooded comment: "Ferrari is a rogue. Remind him that he owes me a six-footer for my regiment;" or as the ill-advised supporters of King Stanislaus learnt, when, wishing to return to their native land after having found a grudging asylum in Prussia, they were met with the stern mandate: "No! They shall not budge until they furnish, every mother's son of them, two tall substitutes, or undeniable Prussian security for the same, in the sum of 2000 dollars each. This was the condition on which they were granted a refuge in my dominions."

Of the number who had entered into this singular compact, was no less a dignitary than the Bishop of Wilna. Unable to discharge his bond, he attempted flight, but was stopped ere he could get away. Manteuffel was asked to intercede on his behalf. "I would willingly try to help the Bishop," replied the Envoy, "were he accused, say, of plotting to dethrone the King of Prussia, or of attempting to take his life; but to intercede for one who has promised

tall men and failed to supply them, would be to expose myself to the most unpleasant consequences without the slightest hope of success."

Ay, at home the despot could do as he liked. But abroad it was otherwise. Though not at first. So long as his mania was a topic of amusement rather than a bugbear to his neighbours, man-hunting concessions poured in from every quarter. His emissaries had the free run of the Czar's vast dominions, where a few tall serfs more or less mattered little. The deputies of the free city of Hamburg, seeking assistance against the Danes, brought to Berlin an offer of perpetual liberty to raise recruits within their precincts. France had huge peasants to spare, and transferred her claim upon them to officers of the King's own. Little Hanover, following suit, granted the right to take big game within her borders; whilst a permit to do the like in Hungary opened the King's arms, tabagie, and heart to Count Seckendorf. Little did the conceders of these hunting rights guess what wolves in sheep's clothing they were harbouring, or how sore a rod they were preparing for their own backs.

For so far, as between ruler and ruler, all was

fair and above-board. It was only when the coveted privilege was denied him that the King's amazing pretensions thereto, conceived of the too great concessions he had enjoyed, were foisted upon his startled neighbours. To hunt big men where he pleased, to "lift" them whence he could, was no more a privilege, but a lawful due which he would have, and enjoy, whether or no.

His officers once pressed some men at Dantzic, whereupon the magistrates of that town, finding protest to be an utter waste of breath, tried the effect of a proclamation constituting the practice a capital offence. This enraged the King beyond measure, and having the whole inland trade of the town under his thumb owing to the fact that it had to pass through his territory, he forthwith seized every Dantzic cart he could lay hands on, and only released them when the offensive decree was revoked and his privileges were established on what he considered to be a neighbourly basis.

But the affair of Cöthen perhaps best illustrates the audacity of his exactions and the lengths to which he was capable of carrying them. The Prince of Anhalt-Cöthen, it would

appear, had raised an independent company for the King of Poland, on condition that it should remain in his own country unless required for active service; and certain of his petty brother Princes, taking umbrage at this ominous disturbance of the local balance of power, called upon his Prussian Majesty to restore it to its former equilibrium. Frederick William desired nothing more. Such splits afforded a ready opening for the thin end of the recruiting wedge, and on this occasion, as on many others, he drove it home to the very butt.

An officer was immediately despatched to Cöthen with a letter for the Prince, "simply desiring leave to recruit in his country." The Prince was rather taken aback by the unexpected request, and while he was considering whether he might with safety dare the rod which he was quick to perceive lay in pickle for him, the officer, without so much as saying "By your leave," directed the troopers who were with him to raid the objectionable company and to take their pick of it.

"Stop!" cried the Prince, when he saw what was intended.

"Why so?" asked the officer.

"Because if you do not," said the Prince, "I will have the town gates closed upon you."

"Your Highness may do as you please," was the cool rejoinder. "I have my orders, and—there's a whole regiment of us not far off!"

The King sometimes did a little hunting on his own account, though not with a regiment at his back. If he happened to meet a tall, fine-looking citizen or peasant in the course of his walks abroad, he stopped and had a friendly chat with him on the benefits of voluntary enlistment. The views of sovereign and subject did not always run exactly parallel on these occasions, and when this was the case they were made to coincide by a demonstration beautiful in its simplicity. His Majesty hooked the crook of his stick into the collar of the dissentient's jacket, and so hauled him off to the guard-house.

After such lawless fashion as this did Frederick William prosecute his search for the elusive Goliath of his imagination, and though many a man of preternatural inches, trapped by methods worthier of the bandit than of the

King, fell into his widespread toils, each in turn served only to stimulate his fancy to loftier flights, and to lure him on in his Tantalus quest for the Higher Ideal of perfervid dreams. To that ideal he never attained. Like many of commoner mould, he aimed too high.

CHAPTER IV

THE KING'S OWN

NEVER did there march to tuck of drum a more unique body of soldiers than Frederick William's own regiment of Great Grenadiers.

The King's extraordinary mania for tall men began to show itself while he was yet Crown Prince. At the hunting seat of Wusterhausen, some twenty miles south-east of Berlin, he secretly collected a squad of stalwart rustics, and neglected his games and lessons in order to drill them. His father lent him an infantry regiment, of which the staff-company was stationed there as his body-guard. Gradually the Prince weeded out all the small men from its ranks, and filled their places with giant peasants of his own selection. In this way most of his pocket-money was spent. His early recruiting got him into many a sad scrape, prophetic of sadder ones to come; and as his father refused to indulge his whim, the tall

soldiers thus obtained had often to be hidden away in stables and haylofts when the old King came to Wusterhausen. His mother showed him more indulgence, and nothing delighted the Prince so much as to parade his big men for her inspection.

It was not, however, until March 1713 that the Guards took on the *personnel* which afterwards rendered them so celebrated. Frederick William was now King; 30,000 men were his to choose from. With the Spring Review he proceeded to carry out his long-cherished dream of a picked regiment, the living units of which should eclipse, in size and perfection of discipline, the finest soldiers in the world. To this end he selected the tallest of his entire rank and file, grafted them upon the old Wusterhausen nucleus, and so launched his regiment of giants upon its short but chequered career.

Composed at the outset of but two battalions of 600 men each, the regiment grew, in a measure, with the growth of the King's mania. In a measure only, for the most diligent recruiting failed to keep pace with "a fancy which increased daily beyond anything it was possible

to imagine." His tall men were dearer to him than the apple of his eye. The more he got, the more he wanted. The taller they were, the taller he wished them. A giant abroad was worth two at Potsdam: he might have a few more inches than the tallest there. When secured, he was valued only as an approximation to the next. From the point of view of what the King desired it to be, the regiment was never complete. Yet when disbanded in 1740, its original strength had swollen to three battalions—each consisting of one grenadier and six musketeer companies—comprising 60 commissioned and 165 non-commissioned officers, 53 drums, 15 surgeons, 15 fifes, 2 almoners or chaplains, 195 grenadiers and 1965 musketeers; together with four companies of so-called "unranked," including 4 commissioned and 26 non-commissioned officers, 8 fifes, 12 drums, and 509 privates—or 3030 men in all.

No man in the regiment measured less than six feet without his boots. This was the minimum. Those who fell below it were "small men," fit only for the common ranks; those who exceeded it stood proportionately high in the estimation of the King. A seven

or eight-footer, such as he who answered to the length of Whitworth's pack-thread, was "more esteemed than so many first-rate men of war." Jonas, the Norwegian blacksmith, fell into this category. When he died, his grief-stricken master had him reproduced in marble for the façade of one of his public buildings. One Hoffman, a born Prussian, stood so high that King August of Poland, who was no dwarf, could not reach the crown of his head with his finger-tips. He was made a fugleman, or leader of a file. Some of these front-rankers were nearly nine feet high, and a mitre-shaped *chapeau* added some twelve or fifteen inches to this tremendous stature.

Conspicuous amongst them was one Müller, known throughout England, France and the Low Countries as "the German giant." By profession an itinerant showman, Müller's whole stock-in-trade consisted of himself and his little German wife, who barely came up to his middle. His exact height is unrecorded, but the annalist Fassmann, who had theretofore regarded Baron Bentenrieder as the tallest of men, readily yielded the palm to him when, in 1713, he "discovered" the gigantic showman in his

booth at the fair of St. Germain. Thirteen years later Fassmann again encountered the giant, still on show, but this time in the ranks of the Great Grenadiers at Potsdam. How he came there is best known to his captors. His little German *frau* was dead, and the English one whom he had installed in her place, a shrewish creature little bigger than the former, led him a pretty dance of it. Owing to this or some other cause, the giant's legs swelled to an elephantine size, and he was discharged as unserviceable. When last heard of, he was coining money in the county fairs of England.

Looks was another critical point with the King. He liked his giants handsome, and generally thought them so in proportion to their height, though probably his love was blind. A leading member of the Academy of Arts was employed to paint their portraits, which afterwards adorned the walls of the royal salons. The King himself was a persistent dauber in oils, and when gout confined him to the house, he would amuse himself for days by doing violence to the features of his tall Grenadiers. Each picture bore the date of painting and the

words: "*Fredericus Wilhelmus in tormentis pinxit.*"

The procuration of these giants cost fabulous sums. The King never stole men from officers, whether of his own or other Prussian regiments, but paid for them with a capricious liberality that made many a penniless soldier of fortune independent for life. The royal bounty, according to a popular fiction, was expended only in replacing tall men thus drawn from the ranks; but as a matter of fact a heavy percentage nearly always went into the private purse of the recipient. At the review of 1731, for instance, the King bought 60 men for 145,100 dollars, of officers who had paid not more than 97,380 dollars for them. His liberality, as doubtless the gain it entailed, was equally great on other occasions. An account of July 4, 1735, shows that the Treasury was drawn upon by officers to the extent of 43,000 dollars for 46 recruits. The same year Count Dohna received 12,664 dollars for 18 men, and the year following General Marwitz drew 13,987 dollars for eight. The average price paid for home recruits was about 1000 dollars per head, as a tall brewer, who was once recruited out of his bed, and

only allowed to return to it on payment of that sum for a substitute, learned to his cost; but as the King frequently gave from 200 to 300 dollars for a man who had cost only one dollar "hand-money," or the trouble of "lifting," the profits of the purveyors must have been enormous.

The sums spent in foreign recruiting were far in excess of the home expenditure. Between 1713 and 1735 a grand total of 12,000,000 dollars, or, reckoning seven dollars to the pound, nearly £1,750,000 sterling, was sent abroad for recruits. The cost of exceptionally tall individuals throws a curious explanatory light upon these figures; for, dear as the home article was, the prices of imported flesh and blood necessarily ruled much higher. James Kirkland, a colossal Irishman whom Borcke recruited, ran his captors into the tidy sum of £1260 before he was safely lodged at Potsdam. Seckendorf gave more than £1100 for a tall Austrian. A recruit of the appropriate name of Grosse, cost in various payments £719, of which £214 went to the monks whose tenant he was. General Schmettau pocketed a like sum in 1732 for a gigantic fugleman of foreign

breed; and the recruit Andrea Capra cost £314.

In truth, no expenditure was too great to secure a notable addition to the King's body-guard. He lavished millions upon his "beloved children in blue," while his own children starved for bread. In dishonour, misery, and blood, their cost was incalculable. Their maintenance alone equalled that of eight ordinary regiments of the line. In the matter of rations they were treated better than princes of the blood.

What increased the expense of the regiment enormously was that earlier recruits were generally enrolled only for a term of years, after which they received permission to return home if they had not previously died or deserted. But the proverb, "To have served three potentates on one pair of soles," did not long apply to the Great Grenadier, as we shall presently see.

The King was a colonel of the regiment, and stood only in that relation to the other officers. He once wrote to Colonel Marwitz: "Have Massow fetched, and give him a sound rating for want of due respect to me as his superior. As

he was very drunk, I forgive him; but he must know that he is major and I colonel."

Although the staff pay of the regiment was small, the perquisites of officers—as we have seen—were so many and tempting that commissions were eagerly sought after. To obtain them no great or conspicuous action need be performed. Whim was everything with a master who could elevate a Creutz to the dignity of chief minister simply because he happened to be tall. In the gratification of some one of the King's innumerable caprices lay the whole secret. Thus the Prince Royal's excellent discipline of his cadet corps earned him the post of captain at a tender age; when he first led out his troop for muster—a useless Lilliputian among useless giants—he was barely thirteen; whilst Holtzendorf, a medical man, was created a surgeon-major for nothing more meritorious than the relieving his royal patron's colic by a mighty dose of ipecacuanha.

In order to reside comfortably at the Prussian Court, the providing a weekly treat for the officers of the King's Own was looked upon as indispensable. All the generals and chief ministers, as well as many of the foreign ones,

conformed to a usage which it would have been unwise to ignore. As the officers were mostly hearty young giants, in the enjoyment of pay out of all proportion to their appetites, the expense of such entertainments ran into a goodly sum. Not less than forty or fifty bottles of wine were cracked of an evening, and nothing but the best of everything would do, especially when the royal "colonel," who loved good feeding scarcely less than he loved tall soldiers, made one of the company. Seckendorf had a special allowance for such treats, and generally found it inadequate; while the British Envoy Du-Bourgay, who had none, contracted "a thousand pounds of debts" in less than two years.

One of these singular feasts is described by Baron Bielfeld, in his long forgotten *Lettres Familières*, with great verve and humour. Says the Baron:—

"At the colonel's house we found a score of the principal officers. We had a very good dinner, and they who loved the old nectar of the Rhine were plentifully imbrued. All these corpulent machines are great wine-bibbers. They pour down the bumpers with a facility and good-will truly Germanic. It is part of the

etiquette at Potsdam to place, at the beginning of the feast, a number of bottles on the side-board. When the butler brings them in, the faces of the guests begin to brighten; and as they become empty they are ranged upon the floor in the form of a battalion. The longer the file of these dead men, the gayer the dinner. At about the sixth large bumper, that surly air, which had at first almost frightened me, began to disappear.

"After dinner they sent for the hautbois of the regiment and began to dance. I looked this way and that, expecting to see some ladies enter; and I was stupefied when one of these descendants of Anak, a giant of ruby and weather-beaten countenance, proffered me his hand to open the ball. I could not but be greatly embarrassed when the proposition was made to me to dance with a man! But they gave me little time for reflection, for dance I must. The commanders of the regiment danced, all the officers danced; and towards the end this masculine ball became very animated, thanks to the repeated bumpers of champagne which they made us drink by way of refreshment. About eight in the evening most of these

terrible warriors declined the combat, their huge limbs being no longer able to encounter Bacchus and Terpsichore, and they went staggering off."

And this upon a Sunday, too!

The regimental band, which vied with the "old nectar of the Rhine" in giving zest to these orgies, deserves more than passing mention. Its leader was one Godfrey Pepusch, a relative of the Dr. Pepusch of *Beggar's Opera* fame, and a bassoonist, according to all accounts, of no mean distinction. Travelling extensively in his palmier days, he visited most of the Courts of Europe, and tickled the ears of many a crowned head with his skilful renderings and clever improvisations. His wanderings, after a time, brought him to Berlin, where, on the principle that a bird in the hand was worth two in the continental bush, he gracefully succumbed to the pecuniary inducements held out by Frederick I., and took up his abode at Court in the character of chief bassoonist to his most extravagant Majesty. The general riddance of hangers-on which followed hard upon the accession of Frederick William, transferred him from the palace to the barracks; for Pepusch was not only a musician, but a man of stature,

and on the strength of this double qualification his new master found a place for him in the budding regiment of giants. Here, as permanent conductor of the hautbois band, and as sometime director of that pretentious institution for the training of regimental fifers, the Potsdam "Academy of Music," he served out his full term of twenty-eight years, survived the ordeal and his regiment by a decade, and died, at a good old age, in enjoyment of a pension from Frederick the Great.

In the long winter evenings at Potsdam the King would often command the attendance of his Grenadier band, under the leadership of Pepusch, and while away the weary hours in calmly listening to, or fiercely criticizing, their more or less brilliant performances. On these occasions he sat by himself, save for his pipe and pot, in solitary grandeur at one end of the great hall, while Pepusch and his underlings took their stand at the other. If his master was in an exceptionally good humour, he was perhaps allowed to make the selection for the evening, and the big bassoonist, taking advantage of this indulgence, occasionally chose a piece of his own composing. A story told in *tabagie* once

supplied him with a *motif*, and he composed a movement of six pigs on as many bassoons, heading the parts *Porco primo*, *Porco secundo*, etc. This, on the first available opportunity, he rendered before his Majesty, who held his sides with laughter, and continued to call for the performance, evening after evening, with unabated zest. Sometimes he fell asleep under the combined influences of pipe, pot and music, and the bassoonists, to lighten their task, took the wink from their conductor and boldly skipped an aria or two. But the royal listener was not thus to be caught napping. His eyes opened on the instant wide with anger and astonishment, his purple face assumed a deeper hue, and rapping out a good round German oath to lend emphasis to the command, he bade the tricksters cease their fooling and render the piece again from start to finish, on pain of having their pay, if not their wind, stopped indefinitely.

The King had at first intended to quarter his regiment at Berlin, but people looked askance at the giants and refused to lodge them. Brandenburg, his next preference, was some distance from town, and though distance went for little with a King who frequently travelled

forty French leagues in a day, he finally fixed on Potsdam as their place of abode. Here he built extensive barracks, converted the magnificent gardens into a barren *Lust Garten* or *place d'armes* for exercising his soldiers, and encircled the whole by a moat which in time became as malodorous as the reputation of its digger. Although the King obstinately held the contrary to be the case, the spot was fatally unhealthy. Fever dogged the steps of all who inhabited there, claiming many a victim. The cemetery just without the gates underwent a gruesome process of "betterment" owing to the proximity of the giant regiment. It came to be known, in course of years, as "the costliest plot of ground in the kingdom." Within its walls scores upon scores of tall men, in graves of portentous length, slept the sleep that knows no *reveillé*.

The duties of the Great Grenadiers who escaped the cemetery were far from onerous. They turned out at cockcrow every morning for inspection aud drill; they kept their arms and accoutrements in condition; they mounted guard at the palace and in the town; they figured at State functions. At the annual reviews

they took precedence of other regiments, and were then dismissed to quarters with a handsome gratuity. Once they were under canvas for a week; once they marched in expectation of seeing active service. Ere they could get a shot at the enemy or at liberty, their marching orders were countermanded. Beyond this they had little to do, except to plot mischief and provide matter of wonder and amusement for illustrious visitors, who were routed out of their beds at unearthly hours of the morning, and in all weathers, to see the drowsy, shivering giants put through their paces. A more ludicrous sight than the lank monstrosities at drill was probably never seen.

Visitors at Potsdam suffered more serious inconveniences than that of early rising. The ceaseless tramp and the sharp challenge of sentries, varied by the noise of guard relieving guard, drove sleep from their pillows. A princess of the blood was once nearly frightened out of her wits by a terrific uproar in her ante-chamber. On opening her door she found the outer room full of Tall Grenadiers, their black moustachios bristling, their arms flashing in the torchlight. She thought the

King had sent to arrest her; but it was only the house on fire.

The mustering of the giants for church parade formed an impressive and never-to-be-forgotten scene. Baron Bielfeld, who visited Potsdam in 1739, when the regiment was at its best, thus describes the function :—

"On Sunday morning we were awakened by the roll of a hundred drums. The military music made us hasten our toilet : we slipped on our clothes and hurried to the parade, where we saw the whole grand regiment defile, dressed in their best, but bearing no arms except swords. They are here led to the temple of the God of Battles as to the field of Mars, and attendance on the sermon or mass forms a part of military discipline.

"The sight of this grand regiment struck me exceedingly. The hautbois, very richly bedaubed, began the march, followed by the fifes and drums. All the fifes are handsome negroes, very finely dressed, having turbans ornamented with plumes, and very elegant chains and earrings of solid silver. Each company was preceded by fifes and drums, and led by its captain and other officers.

"After the two battalions had filed past, came the 'unranked' as they are called. These are men selected from the whole regiment on account of their stature, who receive extraordinary pay, are regarded as supernumeraries, and do scarcely any duty. The sight of this troop more astonished than pleased me. They appear to me like so many walking Colosses; but nature seems to have been entirely occupied with giving them an uncommon stature, for they have little proportion of figure, being for the most part either ugly, bow-legged, or ill-made in some part of their bodies, so that the regiment in general is more marvellous than fine.

"Never did I find myself so diminutive as in the midst of these devout giants! Whenever they stood up for prayer I thought myself a pigmy! I was obliged to hold my head back to see their faces. Both soldiers and officers attended the service with great decency and devotion; but as for myself, I was distracted by the novelty of the sight, and by the reflections which I could not help making. To me the church was a grand cabinet, where some famous monarch had brought together a most extraordinary collection of men of the tallest stature

from the four corners of the earth. Never since the deluge has there been a troop of warriors so marvellous in appearance, of so extraordinary a stature, or who performed their exercise with so much dexterity."

Passing his days chiefly at Potsdam after the manner of a country squire, the King had ample leisure to devote to the training of his favourites. King George II. sarcastically termed him "his brother the sergeant." And certainly no drill-master in the kingdom approached him in proficiency and exactitude. He examined in person every new recruit, assigned him a place in the ranks exactly suited to his inches, superintended with the interest of a father and the eye of a martinet his initiation into the mysteries of bearing, step, evolution and manual exercise. His severity held the men to their duty like so many automatons. His sight was so keen he could instantly detect the slightest irregularity in the swing of the longest line. Both officers and privates went in mortal fear of his merciless cane. If it made their backs sore, it also made their discipline perfect. They moved as if actuated by a common spring. The very bear attached to the regiment knew the regulation

step, movements, and words of command. No manœuvring pleased the King so much as the manœuvring of his Great Grenadiers. Officers from other regiments were drilled with them in order to spread their discipline throughout the army. Cadets from the foremost armies of Europe joined their ranks. Those from Russia were the most numerous. They were drilled in return for periodical presents of tall men from the reigning Czar or Czarina. When they completed the course of instruction the King harangued them, exhorting them to fear God, honour the Czar, and send him big recruits when they became Generals.

Every year the Great Grenadier was new-clad. One always saw him curled and powdered, his arms bright, his ungainly boots shining like mirrors. For the time, his uniform was unique. It consisted of a blue jacket embroidered with small gold Brandenburgs or frogs, lined with red, and having scarlet cuffs; waistcoat and breeches of straw-coloured cloth; and white spatterdashes. However proud he may have felt in this costume, happy he could hardly have been. His garments, cut with a Frederician eye to economy of cloth, fitted with absolute, unbearable perfection. To

bid him "stand at ease" was to mock at his discomfort. If he stooped, he courted certain and appalling disaster. So excessive was the tightness of his uniform, it was said, in all seriousness, to cause spitting of blood! The jacket, moreover, was the jest of Europe, it was so ridiculously abbreviated. The harlequin of a French comedy troupe, bouncing on to the stage in the meagre coat of a Prussian Grenadier, shouted to the grinning pit: "Here we are again—in a clout!"

The King himself wore always the uniform of the regiment—a coat of coarse blue cloth with gilt copper buttons, a straw-coloured waistcoat edged with thin gold lace, and straw-coloured breeches, replaced in summer by white linen. His hat was trimmed with narrow gold lace, a little button without a loop, and a band of gold twist, from which depended on either side a small gold tassel. At his thigh hung a plain sword, secured to an elk-skin belt whitened with the conventional pipe-clay. White spatterdashes, fastened over heavy, square-toed boots by means of immaculate copper buttons, completed his costume.

A French *garçon*, who had been driven from

his native land by religious persecution, once came to Berlin to look for work. Wandering out to Potsdam one day, he stood to watch the Tall Grenadiers perform; and the King, attracted by his simple wonderment, approached and began to ply him with questions, forgetting, for once, "to spit when he saw a Frenchman."

"*Oui, monsieur; non, monsieur,*" said the gaping *garçon.*

"Say 'Your Majesty,'" whispered one of the officers behind his hand; "'tis the King."

"The King!" cried the Frenchman; "who ever saw a king wear spatterdashes!"

His Majesty retreated, convulsed with laughter.

The Great Grenadiers had "pay in proportion to their bulk." The common foot-soldier received three-halfpence a day and ordinary rations; the Great Grenadier drew eighteenpence and fared sumptuously at his master's expense. If exceptionally tall he received a bounty—or at least the promise—of perhaps thousands of pounds on entering, and as much as one or two florins a day while he remained in the service. Nor were these his only privileges. When unable to read and write he was put to school.

A hymn-book taught him to praise God; the articles of war to honour the King. His temporal health was watched over by a surgeon, his spiritual by a chaplain. He had sinecures given him, which he sold to the highest bidder. He trafficked in goods like a merchant; he had his pick of the best lands in the kingdom. A hautbois band enlivened his drill; a wife his leisure. He occupied a snug cottage if married, drank good beer, smoked sound tobacco, and enjoyed the love of his master. One day, when Glasenapp, one of the tallest of the tall men, lay ill, the King's lackeys rushed into his presence and announced the occurrence of some grave calamity. The King sank into a chair pale and trembling.

"What is it?" he gasped.

"The tower of St. Peter's has fallen, your Majesty!"

"Oh! is that all?" said he, vastly relieved; "I was afraid my grenadier might be dead!"

So great was the King's partiality for his big men, indeed, that when pleased with them he could refuse them nothing short of their discharge. This fact was taken advantage of by all sorts and conditions of men, but by none

more than by the limbs of the law. The King hated lawyers, and they, unable to obtain decisions on their clients' cases by fair means, used to bribe his favourite grenadiers to present their petitions, the prayer of which his Majesty would grant on the spot, with supreme disregard for the merits of the case. The abuse gradually assumed alarming proportions. All justice was in a fair way to be subverted. The King's ministers, recognizing the magnitude and consequent seriousness of the evil, demanded a remedy, whereon his Majesty, with a malicious smile, seized a piece of chalk and executed a lightning sketch of a gallows on which there dangled a lawyer side by side with a dog. It was a happy illustration of his favourite saying, "A pound of mother-wit is worth a ton of university wisdom"; and when, in due course, the symbolical answer was incorporated in an edict, the terrified advocates won no more cases through the intercession of Great Grenadiers.

And yet, notwithstanding all the favours that were showered upon him, the Great Grenadier was the most discontented of soldiers. For there was another side to the picture. The

King did not nourish his *chers enfants* entirely with the milk of human kindness. Though he loved them much, he forgave them little. His affection for them was of the sternest type, the hard practical side of his nature being ever uppermost. When they were good, he loved them to death; when they were bad, he reduced them to the same extremity by the cruellest forms of punishment an essentially cruel nature could devise. Expediency came before justice, justice before mercy. A mutinous company he would forgive with a magnanimity that deceived nobody. "I forgive the man, but let him be hanged," was the treatment commonly meted out to the mutinous individual.

Following their master's cue, or acting on his orders, officers suppressed the slightest irregularities by methods indescribably inhuman. A Great Grenadier who attempted to avenge himself upon his brutal superior, unfortunately mistook his man and shot a comrade. He was broken on the wheel. Minor offences were generally visited with the bastinado. Making a man run the gauntlet a score or more times, nipping the naked flesh with red-hot pincers, and slitting or slicing off nose and ears, were

likewise included in the barbarous repertory of pains and penalties.

However amply justified the King may have thought himself in correcting the shortcomings of his long men with such severity, there can be little doubt that he was guilty of an indiscretion in teaching them to write. "I should be in Paradise now," an apocryphal French writer[1] represents his shade as saying to that of the Emperor on the banks of Styx, "but for my treatment of my great men." It was certainly they who, turning his Majesty's compulsory pot-hooks and hangers against himself, painted his character in the blackest colours, and furnished the most damning evidence of his cruelties. The post, it is true, was closely watched. Woe betide the Great Grenadier who was caught airing his grievances through that channel! But whenever a chance of forwarding a letter or petition by private hand fell in his way, he made the most of his opportunity. Although what he did was attended "with a torrent of dangers," in spite of every risk he again "trusted the flattering gipsy" Hope, and

[1] *Dialogues entre Charles VI., Empereur d'Autriche, et Frédéric Guillaume, Roi de Prusse.* Cologne, 1742.

poured forth his heart in appeals for help that never came.

There may be seen amongst the Newcastle papers at the British Museum a unique specimen of the Great Grenadier's calligraphic art. It is a petition, bearing date March 16, 1739, and addressed to Viscount Torrington, father of Admiral Byng, to which are appended the signatures of twenty Englishmen who had been enticed into the Potsdam Guard. The picture the poor fellows draw of their barrack life is piteous to a degree. Independent and unbiassed evidence fully bears out their statements, which may be summed up, in their own pathetic language, as follows :—

"Neither humanity nor reason could conceive the unnatural actions there in force. The diabolical methods used to divest them of their tranquillity must grate all honest ears, harrow all honest hearts. What man could bear, and especially he who had once been free, the cruel inhuman strokes of brutal sway, the insulting insolence of knavish office, and that, too, imposed upon him for life? Unrestrained power was there joined to a malicious will and brutal disposition. Ruminating upon their never-to-

be-forgotten liberty alone was sufficient to force them to shorten their days. This had been the fate of numbers unwilling longer to bear the oppressor's wrongs. Whether to sit down tamely under their cruel bondage, and dwindle their lives away in despair, or boldly to risk all in the pursuit of liberty, was the question for those who remained. The former seemed too timid and mean a course for English souls; the latter had its train of dangers. Yet they retained still some tincture of their native bravery, and if those to whom they appealed remained unmoved by their innumerable stripes, or suffered their calamity to be longer lived, they would make one other glorious struggle for liberty, let the consequences be what they might. Death for the unhappy had in it nothing frightful."

Into this—the main stream of the Great Grenadier's woes—there flowed many minor rivulets of discontent. Nine times out of ten he had been forced or inveigled into the service of a master whom he hated. Unless death put an end to his bondage he had absolutely no hope of escape. The King's presence at Potsdam kept him in continual awe. His prison was unhealthy, malignant fever not the most

desirable means of release. No spirits were allowed within the gates, and a consuming thirst for liquor aggravated his thirst for liberty. Why should not the Great Grenadier enjoy his glass now and then, when his master got rolling drunk nearly every night in the week? A man might love freedom, too, better than a shrew who was consigned to his embrace against his will.

For it was not solely with a view to the contentment of his Great Grenadiers that the King provided them with wives. He thought to breed big men at home by the compulsory union of giant with giantess. The former he had in plenty; to obtain the latter he did violence to the virtuous wives and daughters of his peasantry. No consent was sought, no inquiries were made as to previous marriage relations. Every rule of decency and morality was ruthlessly violated, in face of the most stringent laws to the contrary. Where "great" men and women were concerned the King rose above all law. Stature alone was taken into account. Just as every man over six feet high was a predestined Grenadier, so every marriageable woman who exceeded that height was the

predestined wife of a Grenadier. Here was a unique application of the divine right of kings, and in the exercise of his assumed prerogative the King was "as solid as a rock of bronze."

Riding one day in the neighbourhood of Potsdam, he met a well-grown peasant girl.

"Where are you going, my dear?"

"To the town, please your Majesty."

"Ah! Perhaps then you would deliver a message to the commandant?"

Pencil and paper are produced by General Derschau, who rides with him, and the King writes:—

"The bearer is to be given without delay to Macdoll, the big Irishman. Don't listen to objections."

The girl, suspecting a trick, waited until the King rode off, and then gave the note to an old woman, who, on delivering it to the commandant, was wedded out of hand to the disgusted Hibernian. When the truth came to the King's ears, he declared the marriage null and void.

The authorities had standing orders to report the birth of fine children, and good news once came from Cleves. The wife of one Heinrich

Richter, a Great Grenadier, whilst visiting relatives there, bore a son who was reported to be one and a quarter Flemish ells long, and to have abnormally large hands and feet. The overjoyed King ordered the woman to rejoin her husband immediately at Potsdam; but as it was then midwinter, he consented to a postponement of his further hopes on account of the weather. In March, however, his impatience could no longer be restrained, and a rise in temperature called forth this urgent summons: "Hurry up! The weather is all right now."

CHAPTER V

ONCE A GRENADIER, ALWAYS A GRENADIER

HAD the Great Grenadiers been blessed with courage as they were blessed with wives—that is to say, in proportion to their height—they might perhaps, in some one of their many attempts, have succeeded in hewing their way to freedom. But the tallest man is not necessarily the bravest, and successful conspiracy was handicapped by well-nigh insuperable obstacles. Could the regiment have broken loose as a body, it would have had the army to contend with. As it grew in numbers, too, it was split in half, one section being quartered at Potsdam, the other at Brandenburg. This precaution rendered united action next to impossible. But there existed an even greater bar to unity in mischief. Almost every European language was spoken in the ranks. Consequently, whenever the spirit of mutiny—the sole *esprit de corps*—reached its periodical crisis, the men acted only in parties. The English were the

most restless spirits; but as the years of captivity dragged out their hopeless length, nearly every nationality represented in the ranks struck its blow or made its dash for liberty.

The first disagreeable incident of this kind occurred in the second year of Frederick William's reign. A fire broke out in Potsdam, and as matches and other combustibles were found in many houses, the Great Grenadiers, whether rightly or wrongly, were suspected of having plotted the destruction of the town, which they had already come to look upon as a prison. A number of the men were placed under arrest, but no direct evidence being found against them they were soon released.

Six years later the King narrowly escaped death at the hands of one of his big men. He was exercising a battalion of them, when a shot, fired from the ranks, drew blood from his shoulder. The man who fired the shot was never discovered. During the Review of 1739, again, a soldier discharged his ramrod at the King, but as the firing was very rapid he could not take steady aim, and the iron, instead of piercing the "colonel," hit an under-officer in the ribs.

One evening in September 1724, as the King was smoking a meditative pipe in the Palace square, a tall drummer approached and intimated that he had something of importance to communicate to his Majesty. They accordingly withdrew to a secluded spot, where the drummer, after many fearsome glances this way and that, disclosed the existence of a horrible plot. Some twenty tall fellows, mostly Frenchmen, had sworn a solemn oath to escape or die in the attempt. By some means they had secured a quantity of powder and ball, and as they were all desperate characters the situation wore a very serious look. The King never minced matters on such occasions. Within half-an-hour thirteen of the conspirators lay in irons. Brought before his Majesty for examination, the ringleader insolently "stuck his hat on his head *à la morbleu*, stemmed his fist into his side, and swore that he could stand it no longer. He was heartily tired of his life, and the sooner the King had him hanged the better." As there was every reason to fear that similar dangerous opinions were abroad, the King thought it advisable to treat the mutineers with clemency. The plain-spoken giant lost his

nose and ears, but was allowed to hide his hideous deformity within the walls of Spandau for the remainder of his days. A second was put to hard labour on the fortifications—"condemned to the wheelbarrow," as they phrased it at that time. The rest escaped with penal servitude, after running the gauntlet at the buckle-end of their comrades' belts.

In 1730 the Grenadiers made a second unsuccessful attempt to burn their detested place of imprisonment. From seventy to eighty men were this time concerned in the plot, which must have been attended with the gravest consequences but for the treachery of one of the conspirators. A number of gigantic Austrian heydukes, whom Count Seckendorf had enticed to Berlin as a ready passport to the King's favour, were at the bottom of the mischief, their design being to fire the town, cut the throats of their guards, and effect their escape in the confusion which must inevitably ensue. The King instituted a rigid inquiry into the circumstances, but the widespread nature of the conspiracy again frightened him into the adoption of lenient measures. Some lost nose and ears, others purchased free pardon by running the

gauntlet thirty-six times. The ringleader was pinched all over with red-hot pincers, and hanged as an example.

The example, it would appear, failed to have the effect desired, for a week later fresh disturbances broke out. The severity with which these were repressed drove one poor fellow to desperation. He threw himself into the moat and was drowned.

Suicides were by no means uncommon amongst the big men. "This has been the fate of numbers," declare the English petitioners of 1739. Captivity and brutality often turned the Grenadier's brain, and he then either ended his misery by suicide, or courted death by running *amok*. A young Courlander of noble birth was one of those who adopted this last resort. After bearing his unhappy lot stoically for a year, he implored his discharge. It was refused. In desperation he rushed into the street, and fatally stabbed the first person he met, an innocent child. In 1738, another Grenadier, a fugleman who had quarters in the town, murdered his landlord in cold blood. Upon examination he declared that he had committed the crime simply because he was

weary of life, and wished to be put out of his misery. He was told that his wish would be gratified; but the King was little disposed to make a tall guardsman a head shorter, and the poor wretch would probably have been pardoned had not a serious complication rendered an example absolutely necessary. Notices were found posted in the streets, warning citizens that the Grenadiers who could not obtain their legal discharge had sworn to fire the town and desert *en masse*. This sealed the murderer's fate.

The King's leniency, such as it was, seldom extended itself to defaulting officers of the regiment. Potsdam was once thrown into the wildest excitement by the arrest of two lieutenants of Grenadiers and a school-master's daughter—the beautiful Doris Ritter. All sorts of rumours filled the air, but in the end it was learned that the girl was suspected of an intrigue with the Prince Royal; the officers, of having acted as his go-betweens. The King ordered the girl to be visited by a midwife and a surgeon, both of whom assured him that his suspicions were unfounded. In defiance of this evidence, however—solely because the

Prince, who admired the girl's skill in music, had sent her parents fifty crowns to buy her a gown—the unfortunate creature was whipped through the town by the common hangman, and incarcerated for life. On the accession of the Prince Royal, however, she was set at liberty, and shortly afterwards married Schöner, proprietor of the Berlin hackney coaches. Against the officers nothing was shown except the fact of their having assisted at a concert where the Prince Royal played the flute and the girl the harpsichord. They were nevertheless cashiered and banished.

The philosopher Wolf received less consideration at the King's hands. A disciple of Leibnitz, Herr Wolf was teaching his master's doctrines at Halle, when his University rivals plotted his ruin. They told the King that Wolf held it to be no sin for a Potsdam Grenadier to run away, since in the existing order of things he was predestined to desert from all eternity! The King already had an invincible repugnance to the doctrine of predestination, but here was a version of it dangerously hyper-Calvinistic. He accordingly ordered the philosopher to quit the kingdom within forty-eight hours, on pain of

being regarded as a person predestined to the gallows. The perusal of his works was made punishable, for a time, with penal servitude for life.

When the very mention of desertion from the famous regiment was thus suppressed so rigorously, it will readily be understood that the would-be runaway enjoyed but a slender chance of eluding the vigilance of his guards. "Every precaution humanly possible," to use the King's own words, was taken against desertion. The rolls were called at stated intervals with the regularity of the clock; no stranger or loaded cart passed the gates, either in or out, without undergoing thorough examination. As soon as a desertion became known the alarm-bell clanged out its note of warning, the military occupied the streets, the burghers and neighbouring peasants joined the hue and cry. Few escaped the Man-Hunter's toils who once fell into them. The chances were too few, the risks too many.

In his pursuit of those who, in spite of these vigorous measures, did succeed in making good their escape, no sleuth-hound was ever more keen and ruthless than the King. To put the frontier between himself and his quondam

master afforded the fugitive scant security, since a cartel for the capture and exchange of deserters existed with almost every adjoining State. When tall men were concerned the King, it is true, never observed the cartel himself, but that did not prevent his exacting its rigid observance from his neighbours. No sooner did the deserter's flight become known than the Prussian horse, often to the number of several hundreds, galloped this way and that in hot pursuit. Where the cartel existed, foreign soil was the same to them as Prussian. Where it did not exist, they drew rein only to prepare for the bloody work which in all probability lay before them over the border. No leave was asked, none desired. Might was right, the trooper's sabre his best passport. Sooner or later the wretched human quarry was run to earth in defiance of every inhibition or danger, and literally hacked out of the arms of his protectors, if haply he had found any such, by the free use of cold steel.

A stirring episode which, although it does not directly concern the Great Grenadiers, yet serves to throw a lurid light on the subject of desertion, may here find a place. Nine English soldiers belonging to General Schwerin's regi-

ment, who had been enticed from their native land by the lying artifices of Prussian recruiters, and were quartered at Frankfort-on-the-Oder, once effected their escape, and paid the penalty, in a manner that for cool daring is perhaps unparalleled. Choosing for the execution of their design an hour when the streets were deserted, they attacked the guard at one of the gates and forced an exit at the point of the bayonet. The commandant, suspecting the regiment to contain other disaffected spirits, and deeming it imprudent on that account to order out a detachment, despatched two mounted officers in pursuit of the runaways, with instructions to induce them to surrender, if possible, by gentle means and promises of pardon. Half-a-mile from the town they overtook the deserters, and spoke them fair. Finding, however, that no persuasions could shake the determination of the culprits, they wheeled about and rode off, when the deserters, knowing only too well the nature of their errand, chose an advantageous position and entrenched themselves against attack. Scarcely had they done so ere the officers returned at the head of a mob of armed peasants commandoed from the neighbouring

villages. A determined and sanguinary conflict ensued. Pitted against overwhelming odds, the deserters fought like fiends, and only when they had accounted for a round dozen of their assailants, and mortally wounded an officer, did the survivors, four in number, sue for quarter. It was granted them, but three of the four were afterwards executed by order of the King.

It will thus be seen that the fate of deserters, whether overtaken or taken in flight, was practically a foregone conclusion. Unless the culprit was a man of exceptional inches, the King showed no mercy. Of the Prince Royal himself, when caught in the act of quitting the country, and charged with desertion, he said: "He is no longer my son, but a dastardly deserter who merits death."

An incident which goes to show the utter implacability of the King's nature when deserters were concerned, and at the same time throws a curious side-light on powers of memory said to have been at their best in such cases, once occurred during a review of Saxon troops at Lübben, whither he had gone on a flying visit. While the manœuvres were in progress he caught sight of a tallish drummer, whose face

he thought he knew. Said he to his Polish Majesty:—

"I'll lay you a wager that yonder," pointing to the drummer, "is a man who has served with me."

"Impossible!" said Poland. "I've had that man six years."

"It is six years since he deserted," said Prussia.

But Poland was still incredulous. He could not conceive how Prussia, who at that time had 80,000 troops on foot, could recall the face of a mere drummer after the lapse of so many years. The man, however, was ordered to fall out.

"Is not your name so-and-so?" demanded Prussia.

"No, your Majesty."

"What! did you not serve in such-and-such a regiment?"

"Never, your Majesty."

"You lie!" roared the King, and named the drummer's very company.

The wretched man went down on his knees and prayed for mercy; but his Majesty was deaf in that ear, and the drummer was accord-

ingly sent back to Berlin, where he paid the prescribed penalty of his offence. He was too short to live longer.

But it was not always the deserter who got the bullets in his heart, or had his neck stretched, in expiation of his so-called crime. To aid a deserter in getting away, or to harbour him after he had effected his escape, was as heinous an offence as desertion itself, and whoever was found guilty of either was hanged or shot off-hand, without awaiting the royal sanction. If a deserter could not be caught, moreover, his commander was at liberty to indemnify himself in any way he pleased out of his or his relatives' property. A flock of sheep was once so taken in compensation, and the shepherd owner, whose son was the prime cause of the seizure, appealed to his Bishop. The Bishop in his turn appealed to the King, who both applauded the conduct of the soldiers, and forbade the release of the sheep until the runaway was securely tethered at the loop end of a halter.

On another occasion the King's emissaries were guilty of an act of sacrilege in this connection that threw all Poland into fierce commotion. Throughout Catholic Europe it was

customary to hold inviolate the sanctity of religious houses, as of churches, in behoof of deserters. Some fugitives from the Prussian service, availing themselves of the well-known privilege, claimed and were granted sanctuary at a monastery in Ermeland. The monks sturdily refusing to give them up, a detachment of Prussian troops surrounded the retreat and forced an entrance. Not a single deserter, however, could they find; so they contented themselves with an equal number of monks, who were carried off and forced to exchange the cowl for the Prussian uniform.

In spite of the almost certain prospect of recapture; in spite, too, of the terrible retribution which generally followed that event, desertions from the ranks of the Great Grenadiers were by no means infrequent. As a rule they ended in disaster; but now and then some exceptionally lucky or clever individual, aided by some happy freak of circumstance, succeeded in shaking off the yoke for ever and aye. Such was the fortunate lot of a young Bohemian, one of the tallest and handsomest men in the ranks. True soldier of fortune that he was, this fine fellow sought to combine the sister arts of love and

war by laying siege, in his off-duty moments, to the heart of a buxom widow who possessed the two-fold charm of wealth and beauty. In due time she capitulated, and the happy lover applied to the King for permission to make her his own.

"Want to marry, eh?" said his Majesty, looking the long guardsman admiringly up and down. "How high does she stand?"

"Five feet four, your Majesty."

"Too short, too short, you can't have her!"

"But, please your Majesty——"

"Buts do not please his Majesty. You can't have her, I say! March!"

The guardsman saluted and sorrowfully withdrew. Seizing the first available opportunity, he communicated the King's decision to the expectant widow, who, wasting no time in useless lamentations over the cruel ban thus placed upon their budding hopes and happiness, coolly proposed that they should take the future into their own hands and elope.

"But you know what it means if I am caught," demurred her lover.

"And you know what it means if I am lost," replied the widow tragically.

"Then I'll go," said the guardsman.

So with all possible secrecy the needful preparations were made, and one fine morning, just at break of day, the birds took flight.

How so tall a man as the Bohemian could have been other than conspicuous by his absence is a marvel; yet strange to relate, he was not missed till eight o'clock that evening, when the rolls were called. The King was in *tabagie*, calmly smoking his pipe over a pot of beer, when an orderly entered and quietly whispered a few words in his ear. A look of absolute terror leapt into his face. He turned as pale as death, heaved a mighty sigh, and let his pipe fall to the floor. Then, without a word, he rose and strode out of the room. After giving an officer secret orders, he returned to the *tabagie*, and sat the evening out in profound silence, his countenance a picture of gloomy despair; his guests, meanwhile, racking their brains in vain speculation as to what terrible misfortune had befallen the monarch or monarchy. In the interim, detachments of Hussars were scouring all roads leading to the frontier, in search of the deserter and his fair inamorata. But all was in vain. No trace of them could be found,

and the couple was never again seen in Potsdam. As to whether the Bohemian found the new yoke preferable to the old, history is silent.

The question of the voluntary surrender of his big men was the King's *bête noire.* It was for ever vaulting upon his shoulders, for ever refusing to be shaken off. It dogged his steps by day, haunted his dreams by night. His ministers hardly dared approach him on the subject. The foreign minister who did so became odious to him. The only hope of moving his Majesty, lay in the offer of a man who could boast handsomer features and goodlier inches than the captive whom it was sought to release. Even then there was danger of his keeping the old Colossus when he had got the new. The King never trifled in these matters to the detriment of his regiment. Keefe, lying under sentence of death, would be graciously released if his brother in Ireland provided a taller and handsomer substitute. If the substitute proved one inch shorter, Keefe should hang like a dog.

Except as a synonym for substitute there was absolutely no such word as release in the King's mongrel vocabulary. Merely to utter it was to touch his "tenderest point," to rouse his worst

passions, to elicit all his imperious obstinacy. Neither prayers nor menaces availed to shake his resolution. The discharge of the carrier whom his recruiters trussed with their bayonets and roasted behind a Dutch oven, was solicited by the States Minister for upwards of five weeks in vain. "No!" said the King, "once a Grenadier, always a Grenadier."

The case of Willis and Evans, two Englishmen trepanned through the instrumentality of Borcke, the Prussian Minister in England, shows up the character of this determined captor of giants in still harsher colours.

Among Borcke's agents was a certain Hugh Montgomery, who, after serving as a trooper in a regiment of English horse, had somehow drifted into the pay of the Prussian Minister and became one of his most daring man-hunters. It was amongst unsophisticated provincials that he plied his trade to the best advantage, for he had correspondents all over England, who kept him informed as to the whereabouts of tall men. Once in possession of the desired information, Montgomery would journey to the place indicated and take his prey by stratagem.

On one of these expeditions, in March 1735,

he came to the town of Barford, in Bedfordshire, where, sauntering through the market-place, he fell in with a strapping youth named William Willis, a "hopeful and industrious young man" some twenty-three years of age. Striking up an acquaintance with his intended victim, the artful recruiter plied the unsuspecting youth with drink, and then, in a burst of confidence, produced a letter from his master, whom he described as an Irish lord, wherein he was directed to procure, as second porter to his lordship, a good-looking young fellow who should be six feet four inches high without his shoes. Oddly enough, this height tallied exactly with Willis's, and as a pecuniary inducement of £20 a year standing and 14*s.* a week board wages was held out, the young farmer closed with the offer on the spot and accompanied Montgomery to London.

Arrived there, they learnt that his lordship had gone abroad—to Holland, in fact—and that the new servant must follow him at once if he wished to secure the place. His lordship had very thoughtfully left money with his friend, Monsieur Borcke, to defray the expense of the journey; and, as Willis was all unused to travel,

M. Borcke very obligingly permitted his valet, Krüger, to accompany the new man as far as the Hague. There they discovered that his lordship had again flitted—this time into Prussia. Willis was now for turning back, but Krüger said no: it was a pity to throw away so fine a situation; he would himself see his *bon ami Villis* safely to Berlin. He did so, and there handed him over to the guard, who straightway sent him to Potsdam.

At Potsdam Willis fell in with a second Englishman as tall of stature and as little versed in Prussian ways as himself. This man, whose name was Evans, had been victimized by the same ruse to which Willis owed his captivity. They made common cause in their misfortune, and refused to take the oath of allegiance. "Let them have the bastinado, then," said the King. They had it, and were unable to leave their beds for a week.

Some time after this, when the new recruits were at drill, Krüger put in an appearance on the parade-ground. In defiance of discipline Willis sprang out of the ranks and thrashed him for his treachery. Another dose of the bastinado was administered to him for this misdemeanour.

He fell under it, but two Grenadiers hoisted him to his feet, and the cruel punishment proceeded as though nothing had happened, until the tale of lashes was complete.

The wife of Evans had accompanied her husband to Potsdam with a view to entering his "lordship's" service as cook. On pretence of fetching her children she now obtained permission to return to England, where, with the assistance of Willis's father, a substantial farmer, she succeeded in bringing Montgomery to justice and in moving the Government on behalf of his wretched victims. In July 1737, Captain Guy-Dickens, who then represented England at Frederick William's court, received instructions to demand their immediate release. As it was impossible to have too many helps in a commission of such grave importance, he was provided with a copy of the evidence against Montgomery.

Thus armed, he got his batteries in train upon the Prussian Ministers. They met the attack with great good-nature and politeness, but held out no false hopes of capitulation. "Monsieur," said they, "had surely not lived so many years at Berlin without being sensible of the great

trouble and vexation this sort of affair gave them. Their master was deaf to all representations which tended to deprive him of any of his tall recruits. As for the evidence, they dared not lay it before him."

Undaunted by this reception, Dickens returned again and again to the assault. He could not come at the King, but ministers were always accessible, and whenever they came in his way he opened fire; when they avoided him, he ran them down. At length, patience giving out, they suddenly changed front, and carried the war into the enemy's camp. The pitiful case of one Barbut enabled them to do this with plausibility and effect.

This Barbut was a petty merchant who, many years before, had obtained an appointment as Prussian Consul at London in return for some service as petty as himself. The office entailed so little correspondence with Berlin, that in course of time the insignificant official came to be forgotten. By dint of trading on his consular dignity, Barbut had meanwhile succeeded in running heavily in debt, and eventually found himself an inmate of a debtors' prison. From this unofficial address—the Fleet—he

appealed to his Prussian Majesty and his ministers, who, after vainly rummaging their brains and papers for some memorial of such a man, roundly declared that they had never before heard of him! The disavowal would probably have been final, had it not now occurred to ingenious ministers to utilize the captive at London as a buffer against the annoying attacks to which they were subjected on behalf of the captives at Potsdam.

"What," they demanded, "had become of their Barbut? Did Monsieur say that they knew? *Ach Himmel!* they knew he languished in the depths of a dungeon. It was a shame, a crying shame! and until their poor ill-used Barbut was set at liberty, Monsieur need expect no answer to his application about the two soldiers."

In December, after five months of ineffectual endeavour, Dickens ventured one last effort. Ministers, elated by his previous ill-success, now assumed a defiant tone.

"They had a mortgage there on all the tall men in Europe. If the Emperor's first kettle-drummer, even, was a man fit for their purpose, they would steal him away. Release! They

had no such word in their dictionary, and it was to be wished that the English would strike it out of theirs. They might hang as many Prussian recruiters as they could ketch, but as for the tall men in question, the only way to get them off was to come and fetch them with one hundred thousand men!"

"I shall speak no more about our tall Grenadiers," Dickens writes mournfully, "for I do not see any the least probability of getting them out of jeopardy. They laugh at me when I mention the thing, and ask me, half in jest, half in earnest, how I can urge such a matter seriously, or think it possible they can part with a man who has six feet four inches. I should be thought less unreasonable if I demanded a province or two!"

Among the signatures appended to the touching petition of 1739, appear the names of Willis and Evans. It was "Hope abandon" for all tall men who entered the Potsdam gates.

CHAPTER VI

THE PRUSSIAN MAN-HUNTER IN ENGLAND

ALTHOUGH, as Seckendorf once remarked with biting sarcasm, "length of body counted for more at Potsdam than length of service," the capricious King was by no means blind to those intrinsic qualities which go to form the contented and soldierly soldier. Of all recruits he perhaps preferred the tall Irishman, whose happy-go-lucky disposition and pliancy of metal he was quick to detect and appreciate. The lusty Englishman, too, was made of sterling stuff. It was a bit stiff, perhaps, and required kneading into shape by rough discipline; but when judiciously moulded it could with difficulty be matched for quality in continental hunting-grounds.

This partiality for the stalwart sons of Albion and her sister isle was far from being a thing of spontaneous growth. King George I. unwittingly fathered it. His donations of tall

men begot at Potsdam a relish for English and Irish recruits that long survived the generosity of their donor, and acquired piquancy from the very obstacles afterwards thrown in the way of its gratification. The gifts of the English King did not lead to marriage, as he had hoped; they only led to "seduction." Loving the first George occasionally as a father, and hating the second invariably with the cordial hatred of a brother, Frederick William found himself possessed of a motive for enrolling their subjects which held good alike in times of friendship and in times of enmity. When recruits were denied him as love-tokens, or peace-offerings, he gratified his spite against the sovereign at the expense of the subject by stealing him away, *bon gré, mal gré*, whenever he could kidnap him with any degree of safety.

In course of time there thus grew up a contraband trade in recruits which cost the English hamlet and the Irish cabin many a brawny breadwinner, and its royal promoter enormous sums. Conducted with every precaution befitting its illegality, it continued for years to meet with great success and little opposition. In Ireland it was carried on with absolute impunity,

unmenaced by even so much as a shillelah, for service "over beyant" had in it just the spice of romantic adventure the Irish heart lusted after. The stay-at-home Englishman was more reluctant to go beyond seas, and with him deception or coercion had to be used. In English country districts the practice of "seducing and enticing" had become notoriously common long before Whitehall officialdom took cognizance of it; and even when it did, the earlier efforts made to check it were too spasmodic and feeble to eradicate the evil, or to drive the Prussian recruiter out of the land.

The pioneer of the trade was one Thomas FitzGerald, a lieutenant in the King of Prussia's Great Grenadiers, who owed his commission, as he afterwards owed his fortune, to his signal success in foreign man-hunting. Cloaking his real business under a pretence of visiting relatives and attending to private affairs, in the late twenties and early thirties he paid England and Ireland frequent visits on an errand the nature of which should easily have been guessed, but which appears to have long remained unsuspected by those whom it most intimately concerned. An Irishman by birth, his plausible tongue and

Prussian training rendered him an adept at putting "the comether" on the country bumpkin, whose dull wits had not been sharpened by travel into foreign parts. He appears to have had influential friends at the English Court, and so far as concerned his Prussian master, unlimited credit and reward were his, if he could but obtain tall men.

As his coadjutors, FitzGerald employed three Englishmen, no less cunning and unscrupulous than himself. The names of the precious trio were Taylor, Thatcher, and Musgrave. Musgrave acted as FitzGerald's valet when not otherwise engaged. Taylor had already been "under trouble" in England for roguery of one kind or another, and with his companions he was again running up a heavy score against the coming day of account. When in London these rascals harboured with one Spendlow, who hung out an engraver's sign in Silver Street, White Friars, but was underhand an active abettor of his lodgers' frauds.

How many sub-agents they employed it is impossible to determine, but, judging by their intimate knowledge of the whereabouts, occupations and inches of eligible recruits, the number

must have been both considerable and widely and judiciously distributed. In the art of assuming disguises, and of playing the gentleman's gentleman, the trio were experts.

Originally a weaver by trade, Thatcher soon threw aside his shuttle for a more lucrative means of livelihood. The British workman was in those days forbidden to go abroad, for the purpose of plying his trade, without special licence; and as the foreign demand for his labour grew in proportion to the stringency with which the law against his exodus was enforced, the foreign capitalist—generally a royal one—readily paid a handsome bonus in order to obtain him. Thatcher accordingly turned "enticer." His special line was that of smuggling "artificers in wool" into the Emperor's dominions, where they commanded a high premium.

After serving a lucrative apprenticeship at inveigling the British workman in defiance of the law, in the course of one of his home or continental trips he fell in with FitzGerald, who put him up to a new thing in the way of man-stealing. Respecting the tricks of the trade he had little to learn from the artful lieutenant; but the

pecuniary inducements of the new enterprise being greater than those of the old, he left the skilled artificer to his loom, and tried his hand at entrapping the simple man of inches.

His wife lent him signal assistance. One of the first tall men recruited by means of her blandishments was a susceptible Irishman named Doyle. The national weakness proved the poor fellow's bane, for the woman delivered him into the hands of her husband, who conveyed him to Berlin and there sold him to the King of Prussia for 600 crowns.

Musgrave, meanwhile, was earning as good money and a worse reputation. In a few months' time he achieved notoriety by seducing three of the finest soldiers to be found in his Majesty's Guards. FitzGerald, who was in London at the time, then judiciously changed the venue to Bristol, where, in order to keep his daring assistant out of the clutches of the law, he was obliged to "transmogrify the valet into the master."

Dressed as a gentleman of fortune, and provided with an abundance of pocket-money, Musgrave "played the man of quality to a marvel," inducing tall men to enter his service

with the ease and effrontery of one who had been accustomed to hiring servants all his life. One of his victims was John Massendine, a tall Grimsby man. John's geography was not what it might have been had he lived in an age of compulsory education, and when he set out with his new master in expectation of doing the Continent, it was without a suspicion that it was he himself who was being "done." Mistaking Potsdam for Rome, he donned the Prussian uniform, on the principle that when at Rome one must do as Rome does, without suspicion or demur.

The transformation of the valet into the master cost FitzGerald a pretty penny, but as his Prussian banker was good for any amount so long as results justified expense, he left his fictitious man of quality at Bristol and repaired into Ireland, where he hoped to do another good stroke of business. The English were "too well-off to go a-soldiering" unless deported by strategy or force, but in Ireland there were "plenty of big lads who only awaited an opportunity of quitting the country." His friends there had engaged some against his arrival.

The consummate impudence and duplicity of the man are well educed by his proceedings in London in 1733. The Duke of Newcastle was then at the helm of affairs, steering the ship of state by taking the mean of his colleagues' opinions and skilfully making the course seem his own. With his versatile Grace FitzGerald dined, as he also did with Milord Harrington, Horace Walpole, and other big-wigs of the day. His effrontery went even further. Through some means he got himself presented at Court, where, as he afterwards bragged, he "kissed the hands of his Britannic Majesty, the Queen, and the whole royal family" —an achievement indeed worthy of boast in one who was stealing his Majesty's subjects out of hand. Returning to Prussia, he carried with him four tall recruits, over and above those already smuggled, or about to be smuggled, out of the country by his accomplices.

While FitzGerald visited England only when his company or his finances needed recruiting, his Prussian Majesty had there a permanent agent in the person of his regularly accredited Envoy Borcke. As a foreign minister Borcke enjoyed high privileges. He might import, duty

free, a tun of wine yearly for his private consumption; he had the *entrée* at Court; and last, though by no means least, he was exempt from ordinary process at law. Taking advantage of this privilege, and of that other which entitled him "to lie for the good of his country," he added to his lying theft, and to his theft forgery, thus qualifying himself, according to Potsdam vogue, for the important position to which his diplomatic appointment was merely subsidiary—that, namely, of managing director of the syndicate for the enlistment of British subjects without leave or licence.

In general his methods corresponded with those of FitzGerald, except that he operated on a scale and with a continuity of effort which produced correspondingly large results. He had his numerous agents, who went about the country bargaining for horses which they seldom bought, and hiring grooms, porters, valets and cooks in the name of an Irish lord whom none of them ever saw. On more than one occasion he carried his audacity so far as to forge the name of Lord Falconbridge to the letters with which his emissaries went armed.

Like FitzGerald, too, he made use of his

valet for trapping his victims and convoying them beyond seas. Willis was among those who owed their captivity to the services of this active courier, whose name was Krüger or "Creaker." One Katowski, a Polish musician, was another of his myrmidons. The Pole passed for Lord Falconbridge's steward, and in that capacity achieved fame by trepanning a huge Irishman named Cutler, who, being as little of a geographer as the Grimsby man, innocently travelled with the steward to Potsdam on the supposition that he was all the while in Hanover. When he learnt the fatal nature of his mistake, Cutler swore he would "write to the English Parliament;" but the awful threat had no terrors for Katowski or the King.

Oddly enough, the first effective blow at these obnoxious gentry was dealt from Berlin. To Guy-Dickens belongs the credit of bringing to book the Prussian man-hunter in England. His fine nature and manly heart had long been moved to compassion by the melancholy complaints of his captive countrymen at Potsdam. With the ready assistance of the States Minister, Ginkel, who was perhaps better versed in the tricks of the recruiting trade than any other man

then living, he worked up a mass of evidence against FitzGerald and Borcke such as no ministry, however purblind, could ignore.

The most damning proof against FitzGerald consisted of a letter of his, written from Bristol to the colonel of his regiment. It fell into Dickens's hands, and supplied a complete *exposé* of the lieutenant's motives in visiting England, of his *modus operandi* when there, and of the doubtful esteem in which he held the privilege of kissing royal hands. The letter, together with other documentary evidence of his guilt, was sent over to England, where the crime of turning the King's favour into ridicule told against him infinitely more, perhaps, than that of turning the King's subjects into Potsdam Grenadiers; and from that time he was a marked man.

Meanwhile, relatives and friends of the poor fellows seduced from their native land by "arts and tricks" and carried into cruel bondage in Prussia, had not been idle. Their complaints, indeed, had long poured in upon ministers at Whitehall, where, if they received scant attention, they were at least pigeon-holed for possible reference at some future date. The Dickens

report, coming opportunely on top of these, opened the eyes of King and Cabinet to the serious proportions of a trade that had become notorious not only throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom, but abroad as well. Effective measures were at once adopted for its suppression. The long-neglected petitions were unearthed, affidavits were taken, spies were set to watch the rascally man-hunters; whilst an old Act of Parliament, expressly aimed at the enticing of British subjects into foreign parts, was raked out of the dustbin to which time had consigned it, and refurbished to meet the exigencies of the present evil.

The instrument chosen for the punishment of the offenders was necessarily one of rather ancient date, since the first and only occasion on which Parliament had ever recognized or interfered with the enlistment of British subjects into foreign service, was in the year 1605, when there was passed—3 James I. c. 4—"An Act for the better discovering and repressing of Popish recusants," which, proceeding on the assumption that "such as go voluntarily out of this realm of England to serve foreign Princes are for the most part perverted in their religion

and loyalty," enacted that every one who should so go out of the realm should be a felon, unless he had first taken the oath of obedience. This piece of musty legislation, it will readily be seen, covered the case of FitzGerald and his coadjutors only in part. It admitted, indeed, of their trial and punishment as British subjects unlawfully in the service of a foreign prince; but it was of no force whatever in the far weightier matter of their special *rôle* as procurers. Neither did it apply in any sense to Prussian subjects, of whom there were several engaged in the same disreputable calling. It was therefore extended, during the session of 1736—9 Geo. II. c. 30—on lines which made it felony without benefit of clergy for any person to enlist or procure any other to go abroad for the purpose of enlisting as a soldier. This Act once passed, ministers were ready to take the offensive recruiters in hand.

Two of Borcke's agents, Blume and Gingling by name, first tasted the fruit of their misdeeds. Montgomery, the trepanner of Willis, was the next to suffer. Already he had lain in Bedford gaol for many months, awaiting trial. Found guilty of the offence with which he was charged,

he was sent back to his cell for a further term of three months, fined £5, and obliged to furnish sureties in the sum of £40 for his future good behaviour. One Strömblo, caught in the act of embarking two tall men at Gravesend, next paid due forfeit. FitzGerald wisely kept out of the way. But his aged parents in Ireland were accessible, and upon them the arm of the law fell heavily. Convicted of harbouring Prussian recruits, they were sentenced to imprisonment which had not reached its term in 1740, when, on the death of Frederick William, the Queen-mother interceded for them in vain.

The old Act of Parliament against trepanning visited the offence with death, and English Ministers, recalling the frank permission accorded them by Grumkow, were at first strongly inclined to act upon it and "hang as many Prussian recruiters as they could ketch." But stretching the necks of a few rascally agents could have little deterrent effect upon a rascally principal who was not to be got at by any ordinary process of law. To strike directly at Borcke himself, in his capacity of Prussian Minister, seemed the wiser and more effectual

means of dealing the practice its death-blow. An opportune visit which he paid to his native country gave them the very opening of which they were in search, and without loss of time they intimated at Berlin that Monsieur Borcke's room would thenceforth be infinitely more acceptable to them than his company.

The significant hint thus conveyed by the pen of Mr. Secretary Walpole, accompanied as it was by an unvarnished statement of the cause of odium against Borcke, caused an unparalleled sensation in the Prussian Chancellery, where, as at Potsdam, the eternal affair of foreign enrolments was "the tenderest point." To convey to the King such an intimation as this was practically as much as a minister's place was worth. Grumkow, who did not often lose countenance even when confronted with proofs of his own roguery, was on this occasion "not a little embarrassed" how to make known the disconcerting news to the King his master, and gave Dickens plainly to understand that he durst not; whilst his colleague, Borcke the elder, brother to him inculpated, owned with unwonted sincerity that he was "almost afraid to do it." The envoy's return to England being

imminent, however, it was absolutely necessary that some one should dare the King's anger, and as Borcke and Grumkow each considered the other best fitted to execute so pleasing a commission, and neither would consent to do so alone, it was finally resolved that they should face the tyrant together.

Contrary to all apprehensions and precedent, his Majesty took the matter very quietly so far as his own ministers were concerned. Against the English, however, his fury was excessive, and he swore roundly that Borcke should return to his post in spite of Cabinet, King, and the very nation itself. Let them insult his minister if they dare! That was a game at which two could play, and if anything happened to Borcke in London, he would "take it out of" the English Envoy at Berlin. If Borcke was insulted, Dickens should be insulted; if Borcke was driven out of England, Dickens should have instant orders to march.

To the charges brought against him Borcke opposed a public denial worthy of the master he served. He had been traduced; he had had absolutely no hand in the practices he was accused of. Before the revival of the late Act,

indeed, he had engaged a few men who were now at Potsdam; but he boldly defied them—as he could safely do—to say that they had not come over of their own free-will. To this he swore "with the greatest oaths." The King patted him on the back—such an apt pupil!—and made himself doubly privy to his villainy by showering favours upon him. Borcke got a thousand crowns in hand, and returned to England a privy councillor. Krüger he wisely left behind. An envoy's immunity from arrest did not extend to his valet.

At the Court of King George his reception was iciness itself, and he soon discovered that for once German bluff would not go down with the English. The King declined to grant him audience; ministers refused to receive his letters of credence; every door was shut in his face. For a while he lingered on, the black sheep of the diplomatic corps, without character either official or private. The haughty English refusing to relent, or to regard his offence in any but a felonious light, he finally handed in his letters of recall—which ministers accepted in order to be rid of him—and returned to Berlin, there to enjoy the councillorship he had

won as the reward of his "disservice in England."

While Borcke thus knocked in vain at the closed doors of the English Court, Dickens was realizing at Berlin the truth of the saying that whoso provoketh a King to anger sinneth against his own soul. Frederick William, as we have seen, seldom descended to honourable means of visiting his resentment upon those who were so unlucky as to incur it. Any dirty little trick by which things might be made generally uncomfortable for the offender, best served his turn; so instead of sending his Britannic Majesty's Minister packing, as he had threatened to do, he hurled a dead dog at his head. Better a dead dog than a foolish King.

"The important affair of the dog" first cropped up at a ministerial conference early in February 1737. Only a few days before, Grumkow, dining with Dickens at General Brackel's, had "whispered him in the ear that they should not lose him just yet, as the sentence of banishment pronounced against him had been softened." Dickens flattered himself that the King's resentment was beginning to feel the mellowing effects of time, and carried a light

heart until, at the conference aforesaid, the brief illusion was rudely dispelled; for ministers then suddenly rounded on him, and with awful solemnity demanded: "What had he done with his neighbour's dog?"

To appreciate this question in all its momentous bearings upon the point at issue—the disgrace of M. Borcke—it is necessary to turn back a few pages in the chapter of accidents to which it forms the fitting sequel. At the time it was first propounded, Dickens had occupied for about three years the house in which he then lived. Unfortunately, his next door neighbour was a testy Frenchman, one Monsieur Mauclerc, who, some thirty years prior to this date, had held a captain's commission in the service of his country. The commission he had since lost, but he still retained many of the characteristics peculiar to the swashbuckler of his earlier days. As it happened, he also kept a dog, which he let loose at night in a little yard just under his neighbour's windows, where the animal amused himself from dark till dawn after the vociferous manner of his kind. Sleep being impossible to such an accompaniment, Dickens begged his neighbour, in the civilest

terms, to lock up his dog at nights. The Frenchman's reply added insult to injury. "He was obliged to keep that dog," he said, "to prevent his neighbours stealing his hens and eggs!"

As the nuisance was intolerable, Dickens pocketed the affront, and intimated his willingness to hire a watchman, or to pay for whatever should be stolen during the dog's nocturnal incarceration. To none of these friendly proposals would Monsieur listen, and so the case stood when Dickens was bidden to the marriage of his Prussian Majesty's fourth daughter with the Margrave of Schwedt. During his absence the dog found its way into his stables, whereupon his coachman tied a rope about its neck and led it away to the public executioner, whose duty it was, in addition to clearing the town of criminals, to clear it also of troublesome curs.

Quietness now reigned in the Frenchman's backyard for the space of two years. He neither complained nor replaced the missing guardian of his fowls. Of a sudden, however, just when all Berlin resounded with his Prussian Majesty's threats against Dickens, there appeared on the scene a second dog, more dis-

tracting, if that were possible, than the first. Not knowing at what hour he might have orders to leave the country, Dickens heroically bore with the nuisance until one of his children fell ill for want of rest. In these circumstances he implored his neighbour to concede to humanity what he would not concede to good manners. The Frenchman replied that he could live without humanity, but he could not live without his dog.

Compassion for the sick child now impelled Dickens's maidservants to take the tormentor in hand. Some broken palings in the backyard facilitated their design; a piece of broiled meat and a length of rope did the rest. The second dog vanished from the scene.

When this unwarrantable action came to the knowledge of Monsieur the Captain, he peaked his moustachios fiercely, and straightway carried his grievance to the council board. Dickens, suspecting that one or other of the dogs, or both, might be resuscitated for diplomatic ends, interviewed Borcke the elder. That astute councillor dissembled. "Pooh!" said he, "a dog! · A fine affair truly, to bother us ministers about. When we receive your neighbour's

complaint, we'll send it to you, and you may do with it as you did with the dog—what you like."

For a fortnight Dickens congratulated himself on having laid the disquieting spectre. But he little knew the rare diplomatic skill of which they were capable at Berlin. In ministerial hands the dead dog was rapidly assuming political life and importance, though which dog it was does not appear. At the end of the fortnight came a message, through no less a person than Baron Demerath, the Emperor's Resident, intimating that ministers should "be glad if M. Gidikins would make a few apologies to his neighbour for what had happened." By Wednesday of the following week, the date of the conference already mentioned, the dog had attained his full diplomatic growth and vigour, and ministers now espoused his cause in downright earnest.

"They told me in a very rough manner," says poor bewildered Dickens, "that they were surprised I had not yet made my excuses to my neighbour for what had happened to his dog, which one called a crime, another an extraordinary violence, a third by some other hard

denomination. Three weeks ago M. Mauclerc was told it was not permitted here for one neighbour to have anything in his house that was troublesome to another. Now *I* was told that every one was master in his own house to do as he pleased, and that if I did not like the barking of a dog, why did I not leave my house? I expected every moment they would tell me that the stealing away of a Prussian dog was a matter of much greater importance than the stealing away several score English subjects!"

Here was the real root of the matter, and ministers unblushingly made the most of the ludicrous pretension. The dog once resurrected and habilitated in diplomatic garb, they kept him snarling and snapping at Dickens's heels until, in sheer desperation, he consented to make an equivocal apology. The surly Frenchman, on his part, agreed to refrain from further cause of annoyance, and so ended "the important affair of the dog." But thenceforward it remained an established fundamental of Potsdam ethics, that to entice a Prussian cur was a more heinous crime than to kidnap any number of his Britannic Majesty's lieges by force or fraud.

CHAPTER VII

BAD WEATHER AT WUSTERHAUSEN

"Look! There goes Saint Recruit."

Such was the remark commonly heard in the streets of Berlin whenever Councillor von Marschall appeared in public, for Councillor von Marschall had charge of the recruiting fund, and the nickname was a humorous tribute to the high esteem in which his Majesty held all things connected with that important trust.

All things; but above all else the man-hunting fraternity of whose restless energies it was the fountain-head. The person, liberty and life of the recruiter were things inviolable in the eyes of his master, and he who dared to lay a finger on him, be the provocation never so great, incurred that master's inveterate hatred and implacable resentment. With the master what he was, the case could hardly have been otherwise, for the recruiter was but the rampant

symptom of a recruit-maddened brain, and to strike at him was to strike at a caprice superior to reason, at a whim dearer than life. Coined in the mint of this whim, and issued thence for universal circulation, to deface him or debase him was a crime unpardonable. Hence it came about that while the abduction of the tall foreigner furnished the King and his ministers with matter of ironical jest, or afforded them scope for the exercise of petty diplomatic ingenuity, the maltreatment of the abductor "occasioned a deal of bad weather at Wusterhausen," where his Majesty passed most of the stormy years of his later life.

But actual molestation of the recruiter was by no means necessary to excite the King's extreme touchiness concerning him. Merely to speak of him with disrespect was quite enough, since, in his fanatic master's opinion, lack of respect for so sacred a personage was all one with *lèse majesté* itself. Two clergymen of Cleves, whose righteous souls had long been vexed by repeated outrages upon their flocks, were once guilty of this shocking crime. Their gross disloyalty was reported to the King. "Hale them before the Consistory Court," said he. It was done,

and that tribunal, acting on the King's initiative, first deprived them of their livings and then sentenced them to the cat. His Majesty, to his credit be it said, annulled the finding of the Court, though not before he had taught the culprits the meaning of the proverb, "Love me, love my dog."

Love me, love my dog! To teach his own subjects their duty was easy for one who had the tawse of the despot in his hand; but when it came to inculcating the lesson upon neighbours who were such only in a territorial sense, and testy withal, the task assumed more heroic proportions. Now it was M. de la Chétardie, impudently asserting that the zeal of the Prussian recruiter in France outran his discretion. Out of the room with him, his fine feathers all crushed and limp from the angry grip of the royal hands! Again it was "those blasted Dutch." Would they *never* learn to leave his recruiters alone? What right had they to lay a pair of them by the heels simply because a miserable burgher had been "lifted" out of the mire of his native town and set down, as with his feet upon a rock, amongst the first rank of Great Grenadiers? Send for Herr Ginkel!

Ginkel posts off to Wusterhausen, scenting thunder in the air. "Herr Ginkel, what's the meaning of this? Your people have thrown two of my recruiters into prison!" "Perhaps they deserved it, your Majesty," says sturdy Ginkel. "You should keep your recruiters in order." "What! when they belong to the best-ordered army in Europe?" splutters the King. "By this and by that, if you don't retract your calumnious words, I'll——" At this point his wrath boils over, and with uplifted stick he rushes upon the Envoy. Ginkel's hand glides to the hilt of his sword, and his Majesty, brought to his senses by the significant act, falls back cowed, but still fuming. "Had he struck me," swears the Envoy later to his bosom friend Pöllnitz, "I should have run him through without a qualm." Oh "those blasted Dutch!"

The death of the old King of Poland supplies a new lever with which to force the recruiter's cell. One of the most industrious Prussian man-hunters is a certain fanatic priest, Liberda by name, who rambles through the Empire converting the Emperor's Catholic subjects to his heretical notions, and persuading or coercing them to change their allegiance as well as their

religion. Many a Hungarian and Bohemian of goodly inches finds his way into the Great Grenadiers through this canting enthusiast's trickery—until the Emperor gets wind of his doings, and decrees that he shall rest from his labours for a season. Wandering into Saxony, the crazy evangelist-recruiter is there thrown into prison. A little later Frederick William is asked to recognize the new King of Poland, who is also Elector of Saxony. "Never!" cries he, "until I get my Liberda back."

Again, Hesse Cassel is the offender. No less a man than Quade, Major von Quade of the Prince Royal's regiment, is in hot water there, and all for what? Merely for a trifling excess of zeal in recruiting! Will they give him up? Not they! "Very good!" roars the King. "Seize all the Hessian officers you can catch, and Quade them. Never mind their rank—the higher the better." Two are accordingly run to earth and thrown into a dungeon whose foulness they would "be ashamed to describe."

And yet again it is the Saxons, who have now had the temerity to arrest a Prussian subaltern, and court-martial him merely for seducing tall

fellows out of their wretched garrisons. The poor fellow actually lies at Dresden under sentence of death. "Katsch! Where's Minister Katsch? Ha! here you are at last. Is Saxon Envoy Suhm in town?" "He is, your Majesty." "Then go to him," thunders his Majesty, "and tell him from me that if my officer is hanged at Dresden, M. Suhm shall hang at Berlin." Away goes Katsch, gloating over "the rough compliment" of which he is the bearer, and which, when it is duly conveyed to poor Suhm, so terrifies him that he throws his belongings together and incontinently flees the town. Bad weather indeed at Wusterhausen!

Ay! bad weather—especially if the neighbour whose rashness caused it was weak as well as fractious, for the King, finding himself then in his true element, carried matters with a high hand. Instead of apologizing for his recruiter's transgression, how glaring soever it might be, he fell back on the threadbare plea of deserter-catching, raised a terrific hullabaloo, appealed to his cartel rights or the law of nations with all the confidence and indignation of one who had never violated either, threatened retaliatory measures too awful for words, and in the end

generally succeeded in hectoring his puny defier into the unconditional surrender of both recruiter and recruit. To his honour or to his dishonour, he never disavowed an agent who was in trouble, nor abandoned him to his just deserts.

In course of time the royal château at Wusterhausen thus came to be looked upon as a sort of international barometer whose warnings were not lightly to be ignored. The English, it is true, rid themselves of the wrathful monarch's director-in-chief with perfect impunity because of their insular position. Confident in her superior strength, France put his officers to the rack, or condemned them to the galleys, with supreme disregard of his blusterings. But the smaller fry of States, who could arrive at no mutual cohesive understanding, and were, moreover, hopelessly overawed by the unparalleled growth of his army, thought twice before going to such lengths as these. Empty threats, with now and then a full cell, were as much as they durst venture. The Elector Palatine himself judged it inexpedient to hang Hompesch for the unfortunate accident which befel the tall carpenter of Jülich through his maladroitness. His master's stormy representations snatched him from the

very foot of the gallows, though for the term of his natural life he occupied a portion of the Palatinate little longer than the famous chest which cost him his liberty and came so near to costing him his life.

While the state of the weather at Wusterhausen in this way exercised a generally beneficent influence on the welfare of the Prussian recruiter, it now and then happened that some one or other of the lesser States or Principalities, lashed into fury by oft-repeated outrages for which they could obtain no redress, threw discretion to the winds, and by some overt act of reprisal boldly defied the blustering demi-god to do his worst; and no stronger proof of the capricious value which Frederick William set upon his recruiter need, nor indeed can be, adduced, than the fact that, miser and craven though he was, he twice accepted the challenge and went to the very verge of war in defence of him.

The first occasion was in 1729, when there occurred a sudden crisis in the standing quarrel with Hanover. For five years, ever since Frederick William and his *beau-père* first fell out about recruiters, the tall Hanoverian had been a

bone of contention between the two Courts. A natural antipathy between Frederick William and the second George infused new life into the quarrel, and very nearly drew new blood from it. King George complained of the Prussian hospitality forcibly extended to his German subjects; Frederick William returned one of his ironically vague answers and extended his hospitality still further. King George thereupon had a number of Prussian recruiters seized and condemned to hard labour; whereat Frederick William flew into a towering passion, stole all the tall men he could from the Electorate, and, in the felicitous phrase of Grumkow, prepared to "make a breakfast of Hanover."

He approached the leonine repast in truly characteristic fashion, "breathing blood and slaughter." First of all he attacked poor palpitating Queen Sophie, and commanded her to write no more letters to her royal brother or any of his tribe. Next he snapped up, by way of relish, an inoffensive English sailor-man,[1] who happened to be strolling through the streets of Königsberg at high noon, unsuspicious of

[1] Belonging, oddly enough, to "the good ship *Hanover* of Hull."

kingly crimps. Nineteen regiments of infantry and cavalry were then mobilized, regardless of outlay, and marched in all haste to the Elbe. The Great Grenadiers quartered at Brandenburg shouldered their muskets and went to the front with the rest, the Crown Prince, now "Colonel Fritz," at their head. Fritz did not at all approve of his father's hot-headedness, though he durst not say so. He was in love with English Amelia, and to set him to fight her countrymen was a thing highly gratifying to his father's spite. There was every prospect of the Anglo-Prussian "match" blazing into war.

Trembling Hanover, involved by her absentee ruler in a quarrel for which she had little inclination, bestirred herself to make what show of resistance she could. The puny Electoral army, and the few Hessians and Danes in Electoral pay, girded themselves to do battle with the finest troops in Europe; whilst the principals to the quarrel issued manifestoes in which each, after the manner of royal pugilists, solemnly called heaven and earth to witness that he was solely in the right and the other wholly in the wrong.

Beyond an insignificant army, a righteous

cause, and public approval, the Elector-King had little at his back. His English Ministry were by no means effusive in their promises or sympathy. They had little love for the petty Electorate that forced upon them every year a double dose of *mal-de-mer* they would gladly have escaped. As for money, they had none to waste on quarrels of German make. It was all required for wars of home manufacture, and for the purchase of worthless continental alliances at prices ruinous to the nation. Just how the Elector-King was to bear the burden of his quarrel did not appear, but he went ahead.

On Frederick William's side the crucial question was, "How would the Emperor take it?" The Emperor's men, the Emperor's money, he could do without, having plenty of his own; but upon the Emperor's sympathy, whether secret or avowed, depended the attitude and action of Germany at large, and that was a factor in the deglutition of Hanover which he could ill afford to slight. The brutal violences of the Prussian recruiter, be it remembered, had already been keenly felt throughout the length and breadth of mid-Europe. The German States especially smarted from them, and desired

nothing so much as to see the author of these scandalous outrages brought to book for his lawlessness. Too timid or too weak for independent action, yet ready to make common cause with any powerful champion of the universal grievance, they were as tinder awaiting the spark. To supply that spark, by resorting to open hostilities in support of his assumed recruiting rights, was more than Frederick William cared or dared to venture, unless first assured of the Emperor's moral support in his immoral enterprise. No such assurances, however, were forthcoming. On the contrary, his terrible threats were pooh-poohed at Vienna as the veriest rodomontade. "He may bluster," said the shrewd Austrian Ministers, who had got to know him better than he knew himself, "he may bluster, but he will never carry things to extremities."

Events amply justified the prediction, for when the Prussian Rodomont had sent his army marching to the extreme limit of his outposts, he abruptly changed his tactics and whistled it back again. "An unparalleled act of dignified forbearance!" cried his few admirers; but the true reason of his sudden change of front

need not be minced. It smacked as little of dignity as of glory. Hanover was saved by cowardice.

For, with the fear of a united Empire before his eyes, Frederick William durst not "raise a devil he could not lay;" and in the very midst of his blusterings there occurred a singular incident which, conjuring up the awesome shape in lurid colours, afflicted him with a political nausea so extreme that he thought no more of his boasted territorial breakfast.

Entering his cabinet one morning, he saw on his table a fragment of paper with writing upon it. He picked it up and read these words: "Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an embassage, and desireth conditions of peace."

Regarding the incident as a piece of effrontery on the part of his ministers or attendants, the King's first emotions were those of anger; but more sober reflections supervened and forced upon him the conviction that the text was a

veritable warning from God. It struck terror to his superstitious soul.

Without loss of time he obeyed a divine message which chimed so nicely with his own political misgivings. He would send that embassage while there was yet time! In all haste a council was summoned. One minister, perhaps guessing how it stood with his master, inveighed in unmeasured terms against war in general and all promoters of it. Others satisfied stray scruples as to the *point d'honneur*. It was quite a mushroom Peace Congress, and since friends of both parties to the quarrel had already intervened, counselling pacific measures, Frederick William yielded. He would send that embassage! So his troops were recalled, the English sailor-man went free on payment of an arbitrary fine of twelve rix-dollars, and the fate of the 200 Prussian recruiters who, it was alleged, languished in the prisons of Hanover, as also the fate of the Hanoverians who were the objects of Prussian hospitality, was referred to arbitrators appointed by their respective claimants. Instead of breakfasting off the delectable duchy, Frederick William ate humble pie.

Once roused from their national apathy, the

Dutch showed as uncivil and absurd a disinclination as the Hanoverians from being carried off by Prussian kidnappers. Count Flemming of Saxony was once treated to a sample of their growing animosity against the Recruiter King, more entertaining than serious. He was posting through Holland in 1724, attended by a numerous retinue, when the people mistook him for his Majesty of Prussia. Before every inn where he put up a mob speedily collected, and whenever the Count showed himself, he was greeted with groans, hisses, and derisive shouts of: "Right face! left face! Twenty-five stripes!"

It took long years of cruelty and violence, however, to stir the sluggish Dutch blood to the point of braving the fury of their awe-inspiring neighbour by open retaliation. Recruiting party trod on the heels of recruiting party, and when the supply of stalwart carters, farmers and burghers ran short, free contribution was levied on tall stragglers from the Dutch garrisons. The King welcomed all with open arms—arms which closed upon them never to open again. Dutch citizens, he argued, were his by right of capture, Dutch soldiers by right of treaty; for their High

Mightinesses, by acceding to the Convention of Hanover in the mid-twenties, had agreed to supply him with succours in his time of need, and his need of tall soldiers was ever urgent. Such was the characteristic interpretation he put upon his treaty rights, in so far as they applied to the Dutch.

Their High Mightinesses, unfortunately, could not see the matter in this truly Prussian light. Not for such singular proofs of regard as this had they consented to become allies of Prussia. Time and again they sat in solemn conclave on the violences of the ruffianly marauder. Their Minister at Berlin, honest Herr Ginkel, passed his days in the solemn presentation of solemn memorials which the King, while reading, punctuated with frightful German oaths levelled at the obtuse heads of "those blasted Dutch," who stubbornly refused to regard outrages as neighbourly amenities. But the memorials, though strong in language, were followed by notoriously "faint proceedings," and hence served to pique rather than to stall the King's appetite for tall Dutchmen.

But even Dutch patience, proverbially bovine though it was, had a limit beyond which it might

not be urged with safety. The roasting of the tall carrier pushed it well up to that limit; while subsequent outrages sent it bridling far beyond the bounds of human endurance, to the climax of summary vengeance. Their High Mightinesses, with a courage for once in keeping with their pretentious title, took the law of nations into their own hands and shot two of Frederick William's sacrosanct recruiters.

The Prussian recruiter seldom ventured within the gates of fortified towns, for sore experience had taught him that discretion which is the better part of valour. In his desire to preserve a whole skin he confined his nefarious operations to the suburbs, where military supervision was lax, and avenues of escape were many. Here, in by-ways and taverns frequented by the soldier on pleasure bent, he took his prey as chance delivered him into his hands. The garrison of Maestricht had long suffered heavily from his depredations, and when, in December of 1732, it became known that a trio of the sneaking clan were haunting the vicinity, some of the officers within the walls hit upon an ingenious means of effecting their capture. A letter was concocted, purporting to come from an informer, in which the enrollers

were assured that if they would meet the writer at a specified hour and place, they should find there a tall soldier who would serve their purpose admirably well. The recruiters walked into the trap without suspicion, and were met, not by a single soldier, but by a squad, who disarmed and secured them on the spot. Stripped of their disguise, one of the number proved to be a well-known Prussian lieutenant of good family, another a sergeant, the third an Aix-la-Chapelle militia officer employed in the Prussian recruiting service.

In the first flush of capture it was proposed to hang the rascals out of hand, but more sober counsels prevailed, and their fate was referred to the decision of the States-General, who ordered a trial by council of war. Masch, Prussian Resident at the Hague, hearing the news, interceded with threats. "Justice must for once take its course," said their High Mightinesses curtly. Nevertheless, the lives of the Prussian officers were considered to be "pretty safe."

The council of war acted with true Dutch deliberation, and some weeks had been consumed in working up evidence against the prisoners, when there occurred an incident which

materially hastened its decision. A Dutch trooper, in passing through some corner of Prussian territory, was taken and carried to Wesel, where they stripped him of his uniform and arms. Happily, he found means to effect his escape, pressed a chance horse into his service, and added the story of his cavalier treatment to the already heavy score of Prussian indignities. The council dallied no longer. The two officers were condemned to be arquebussed; the sergeant, to suffer banishment to the Indies after witnessing their execution.

Meantime, a Prussian colonel and an auditor were galloping to Maestricht to take an official information of the case. They arrived after the execution, and were refused sight or copy of the *procès criminel.* The colonel rode away white with rage, hurling behind him threatening epithets—the first mutterings of the approaching storm.

News of the affair spread with the rapidity of wild-fire, and soon every Court in Europe was on the *qui vive* to learn its effects at Wusterhausen. When the tidings reached Frederick William his anger was terrible to witness, for he had little expected such treatment at the hands

of their meek High Mightinesses. Berliners looked for immediate and high-handed marks of his resentment. The States themselves, remembering the fate with which Hanover had been threatened, anticipated a stormy scene, and lost no time in strengthening their border garrisons. At the Hague, however, it was thought that his Prussian Majesty would never magnify the insult into *une affaire d'éclat*, but rather seek revenge through the contemptible reprisals in which he was a past master. How true a forecast of the weather at Wusterhausen this was, remains to be seen.

An ominous calm succeeded the first ebullition of passion, and those who were deceived by it flattered themselves that the affair would be attended with no serious consequences—that the storm had blown over; but they did generous injustice to the King's low cunning and inveterate spite. The wrathful monarch was merely nursing his anger until the time should be ripe for paying the Dutch out, not in their own, but in a baser coin. To visit them with condign punishment, as he had threatened to visit Hanover, was yet far from his thoughts, though on its way. He had other resources at

command—resources on which he might draw, if he were but cautious, without setting the tindery Empire ablaze.

The first indication of how the wind blew was afforded by the death of Major-General Hompesch—one of the ablest Dutch officers of the day. Deceived by the calm at Wusterhausen, Ginkel communicated the intelligence to his Prussian Majesty, who replied with a pen dipped in gall.

"He was concerned to hear of the Major's decease," he said, "for that gentleman's own sake; but he rejoiced at the loss their High Mightinesses had sustained in the death of so brave an officer. The scene that had passed at Maestricht was engraved where it ought to be, and he would soon have an opportunity of showing those gentlemen with whom they had to do."

It so chanced that on the Sunday following the receipt of this venomous *communiqué*, Ginkel was due to dine with Count Jagouskinski, and it was probably at this engagement that the King hinted in speaking of his anticipated opportunity; but of this the Envoy had no suspicion until after the event, when, as he was returning

into the town, a sentinel posted at one of the gates fell upon his coachman and gave him a severe thrashing—with a cane. Now Prussian sentries, it need scarcely be said, were not as a rule armed with canes, and this well-known fact, coupled with his Majesty's dark hint and the persistent refusal of the delinquent's captain to entertain any complaint against him, put a very sinister complexion on the affair. Berlin in general believed it to have been instigated—by whom, none cared to say. But Ginkel was not so reticent. He declared, upon what he believed to be unquestionable authority, that it had been committed by express order of the King.

The sequel lent strong probability to this assertion. The sentinel remained at large. Ginkel's formal complaint the King returned without so much as a marginal comment; it was beneath the contempt of ink. Ministers intimated that when their master got satisfaction for the affair of Maestricht, Ginkel might expect satisfaction for the insult to his official "character."

In the interim the King's resentment boiled over in other directions, to the serious disturb-

ance of the general peace. Some Dutch officers at Berlin only escaped the ebullition, at a hint from Ginkel, by betaking themselves to summary flight. Detachments from the frontier garrisons of Wesel, Guelders and Cleves scoured the country in all directions in search of stray Dutchmen. Already they had captured half-a-dozen officers and forty or fifty privates, who lay in irons at Wesel. Others were added to their number daily. Twelve troopers and a sergeant, convoying a deserter, tasted the King's vengeance. A Maestricht packet-boat was attacked whilst descending the river Maes, and the passengers only avoided capture by precipitate disembarkation. Orders were signed for the seizure of every Dutch ship lying at the quays of Königsberg. The merchants of the Dutch factory there anticipated a similar fate.

This tempest in a teapot kept Ginkel busy enough. He loaded the tables of ministers with memorials, and looked in vain for answers. He pressed for an audience, and was told that the King "esteemed but would rather not see him." A few days later he was bidden, to his great surprise, to dine with his Majesty, but excused himself in terms incapable of misconstruction.

The King, having ever before his eyes the fear of that devil which might not be laid, then condescended to notice the memorials.

"Since the Dutch," he said, "had refused him the right of raising recruits in their country, he did not think proper to allow any of his subjects to remain in their service. He had therefore ordered the seizure of all pseudo-Dutch soldiers found on this side the Rhine. If any of those seized unfortunately proved to be born Dutchmen, they should be released—when their High Mightinesses had accorded him satisfaction for the bloody and barbarous action at Maestricht. As for the seizure of Dutch officers, it was entirely a mistake, and they might be had back on the same terms."

This masterly piece of irony was emphasized by further reprisals. Guy-Dickens, as it happened, had had orders from his Court to back Ginkel's complaints, and had obeyed them. He was selected as the next victim.

One evening he was dining with the States Minister, and his coachman, whilst on the way to fetch him, met a couple of soldiers on the Pont de Pierre, an unfrequented bridge near the post-house; the hour, a quarter past eight

in the evening. As the coach rose to the crown of the bridge, one of the soldiers suddenly seized the reins and threw the horses back on their haunches. "At this the groom who was behind got down and bade the soldier take himself off. The soldier replied in these words: '*Hundschwishe canaille!* shut up, or I'll dock your ears;' and drawing his sabre he struck the groom upon the neck and hand. He then took to his heels, closely followed by his comrade-in-arms, who until now had looked idly on." The footman gave chase, but failed to overtake them. He succeeded, however, in ascertaining their regiment — that of Major-General Sidow.

This "very odd incident," as it was called, "made a great deal of noise" at Berlin. Folk remarked on its suspicious resemblance to the Ginkel assault. It got about, too, that the King "had several times expressed himself with great resentment" because of Dickens's interference in the Dutch affair; and when the King resented a thing, he generally found some means of venting his ill-humour. Folk drew their own inferences, and if those inferences did not exactly redound to the credit of his

Majesty, the fault was not altogether one of reasoning.

In his official despatches Dickens did not hesitate to lay the blame where it probably belonged, and his Court, itching for some plausible excuse to annoy a sister-court for which they had any but the kindliest feelings, bade him insist upon the fullest amends. If he could not have them, he must leave Berlin *sans cérémonie.*

The Prussian Ministers, who were adepts at laughing a case out of court, treated the affair in a spirit of jocularity. It was a pure accident, said they, the senseless frolic of a drunken soldier, having neither political significance nor weight. "But if the soldier was so exceedingly drunk," argued Dickens, with unconscious humour, "he could scarcely have run away so fast but that the footman, who was as sober as ever English footman could be, must surely have overtaken him." His reasoning, however, was lost upon ministers. Although the culprit's regiment was known, and the precise discipline of the garrison, by which the rolls were called every night at the stroke of eight, made it an easy matter to establish his

identity, ministers "seemed always to doubt whether inquiries would meet with success."

For the King's resentment was now—March 1733—at its climax. It looked, indeed, as if he would yet throw off the mask and proceed to open hostilities. The regiments throughout the entire kingdom, both horse and foot, had orders to hold themselves in readiness to march at a moment's notice. At Potsdam, moreover, King and Ministers were busy day and night in drawing up plans of operation each of which surpassed its predecessor in extravagance of conception. One of these programmes forecast a forced march upon Hanover, and the seizure of the Electoral treasure there. The proceeds were to be applied to doubling the pay of the Prussian troops in order to prevent desertion whilst they were engaged in "licking" the Dutch!

All this, however, was but the last empty threat of a braggart coward before submitting with ill-grace to the inevitable. He might boast that he should treat the interference of his Britannic Majesty with the utmost indifference and contempt, but at heart he feared nothing so much, excepting always a united Empire, as

aggressive measures on the part of England and Holland. The Emperor, too, was dead against him, and he could not yet afford to lose the Emperor. The whole enormity of his conduct in recruiting affairs was known at Vienna, and what piqued them most was, that they could not excuse it in the least. On the first news of the Maestricht execution Prince Eugene had written him a friendly letter of caution. His dastardly reprisals upon the Dutch aroused the Emperor himself to plain-spoken remonstrance, and pricked the conscience even of a Seckendorf. Acting on urgent orders from his Court, the favourite demanded that the victims of Prussian animosity should be released, and that the King should agree to enlist no more foreigners by force or fraud. He defiantly refused. But fear of the consequences, together with a nominal apology from their High Mightinesses for the slaughter of his innocents, undermined his obstinacy, and in April 1733 the prisons were delivered of their Dutch inmates.

Many of these, it should be borne in mind, were officers and gentlemen, and it may be supposed that on their release the King would have shown them at least some measure of the

consideration due to their status. But not he! Enlarged from remote frontier garrison towns, without a penny in their pockets, the poor fellows were actually obliged to beg their way home. His Majesty's sympathies were wholly taken up with consoling his sergeant who had been sentenced, but not sent, to transportation by the Dutch. Him he promptly made a lieutenant.

The injury to the Dutch Minister's "character" was now salved over by an apology more profuse than sincere; but Dickens could obtain no satisfaction. His case was destined to have a more protracted, though less conventional, sequel, than that of his *confrère*, for the English Ministry, unable to obtain redress at Berlin, where the authorities persisted in their doubts as to the efficacy of inquiries, transferred the scene of their complaints to Vienna, and there struck at Frederick William through his evil genius Seckendorf.

"A thousand ill offices" were laid at the Count's door. It was he who had prevented the double marriage; he who had caused all the trouble between the Hanoverian and Prussian Courts; he who had, by his malicious insinuations, instigated the recent scandalous attack on

Dickens's equipage; and through his minister Robinson, George II. now called upon the Emperor to accord him a signal mark of his Imperial regard by removing the "artful knave" for ever from Berlin.

For Robinson, who had arrived at Vienna but a short time before "more like a courier than a minister," this was a difficult and delicate commission to execute. Fortunately, he had already found a friend in Prince Eugene, and Seckendorf had many enemies at Court. To the Prince he accordingly applied himself, only to learn that his Royal Highness now heard of the insult for the first time, Seckendorf having forgotten to report it! The lapse of memory wore so suspicious an appearance, his Britannic Majesty's charges were so specific, the Prince, as was his habit, "knotted his handkerchief" that he might not forget to acquaint the Emperor with a concatenation of circumstances so astounding; and Robinson, after an hour's audience in which he did his duty with a zeal tempered only by respect for everybody concerned except Seckendorf, took his leave with many self-gratulations on having dealt a fatal blow at "that odious man."

But the blow was not to be so easily dealt, nor was it to prove fatal when it had fallen. Seckendorf was too firmly rooted at Berlin to be lightly plucked up. His presence there was absolutely necessary to his Prussian Majesty, who could neither "live without him, act without him, nor be governed without him." The Emperor, moreover, had no "proper person" to succeed him, and even if he had, could not in honour disgrace him without the clearest proof of his villainy. In short, between a desire to oblige the King of England on the one hand, and to give the King of Prussia no offence on the other, no affair of such weight as this captious demand for Seckendorf's recall had come under consideration at Vienna for many years.

Of all the Courts of Europe, excepting only the French, that of Vienna was perhaps the most expert at splitting diplomatic hairs, and on this occasion their skill was applied in a manner which did them infinite credit, and Seckendorf little harm. To his temporary removal from Berlin they consented; but only on condition that the actual cause of his *éloignement* should be kept secret from the King of Prussia, and that in his absence the King of England should

set on foot at the Prussian Court no negotiation "dishonourable to the Emperor." These conditions—the second of which was in itself a national insult—the high-spirited English Cabinet accepted without demur, and Seckendorf was ordered away from Berlin. Sent into Saxony on a faked-up diplomatic mission, he succeeded, on his return journey, in eluding the courier who bore despatches indefinitely prolonging his absence, and in a short time was again at Berlin, where he remained, in placid contempt of orders, to appease the angry King.

While the English Court thus exacted doubtful satisfaction for the harmless stroke of a Prussian sabre, Frederick William was seeking, by equally roundabout but infinitely less honourable methods, to complete his satisfaction for the Maestricht volley. The incident had scored his heart too deeply to be forgiven, and to oblivion, honourable or otherwise, his injuries were never consigned. Like those gashes in his leg and arm, inflicted years ago by the tusks of the wild boar, the wound broke out at intervals with renewed virulence. Nothing would then serve his purpose but Dutch salve, and though the systematic stealing of tall Dutchmen was

abandoned, he every now and then, just by way of obtaining the requisite emollient, and of keeping his memory green across the border, "lifted" some specially coveted burgher into the ranks of the Great Grenadiers. But he never quite forgave the Dutch the big men whom he was obliged to forego, and when they asked him to send them a professor for their University at Leyden, his curt reply was: "No tall fellows, no professors!"

CHAPTER VIII

AMENITIES OF THE RECRUITER'S LIFE

Joy reigned at Potsdam. In the midst of the morning evolutions there had come riding in at the great gates his Majesty's son-in-law, the Margrave of Baireuth, all unexpected and unannounced, with eight towering recruits in his train. The King's delight was incredible. Tears stood in his eyes. He embraced the Margrave "a thousand times," calling him his dear son, and faltering again and again: "*Mon dieu!* what pleasure you give me." The Margrave, lucky beggar! returned to his domain, which was so small that its affairs of State could be settled at breakfast, the happy possessor of a gold snuff-box set with diamonds and worth 4000 crowns—a knick-knack probably disposed of without delay to the highest Jew bidder.

Differentiating only the warmth of the royal embraces and the magnitude of the guerdon, the Margrave's reception is typical of the welcome

extended by the King to every successful recruiter. He might verify the words of Grumkow, and be "as stingy as the devil" in most things, but in this particular he was liberality itself both in money and *remercîments*. What sums were paid to Dohna, to Marwitz, to Borcke, to Schmettau, to a hundred others, for the gratification of the royal whim! How "deeply obliged" he was by Seckendorf's "trouble" in this regard, and how frequent were the occasions on which he recognized the obligation! How often, as in the case of a Count Nesselrodt, did "very fine recruits" win for their lucky purveyor the far from little "all that that he asked!" How munificent was the grand total—one and three-quarter millions of pounds—expended on big men in the twenty-two years which saw the giant-fancier's mania at fever heat! But it was not in money only that the miser-spendthrift paid. Notable man-hunters had as their reward the command of some much-coveted regiment, the fat perquisites of office, an influential seat at the Council board, or—like Baron Gotter, the *Jupiter foudroyant* of the Vienna wits, and his Majesty's Recruiter-in-Chief for the Austrian Crown territories—the Order of the Black Eagle.

The lesser fry were contented with an order on the Treasury. So, through one door or other, whether palatial main entrance or mean back-way, the trepanner of tall men entered into the joy of his lord.

Colours of infinitely sadder hue filled in the reverse of the picture—the back of the canvas, so to speak, at which few ever looked, lest they should find thereon the marks of their own blood-stained fingers. Such a scene! Amid brutal outrage, deplorable misery, and shrieking woe there flitted the wraiths of unnumbered victims slain in the ruthless endeavour to satisfy this inordinate lust for gigantic men. The King who shed tears of joy when a fresh "mass"—as he feelingly termed a fine recruit—tramped in at his gates, could see without compunction that same "mass" die in the gutter like a masterless dog if too stupid to make a grenadier; while for the sweethearts and wives, the mothers and children bereft, who wept somewhere beyond his gates—God and the recruiter best knew where—he had never a thought, much less a tear. Small wonder that his name was execrated as widely as his emissaries were feared, or that his giant cap-

tives never manœuvred so cleverly as when manœuvring to get a shot at him, never prayed so fervently as when praying for the death they could not compass.

The recruiting of men abroad became a definite industry in the year 1718, and speedily assumed alarming proportions. There was perhaps no corner of Europe, however remote or inaccessible, into which the King's emissaries did not penetrate in their efforts to spy out the tall men of the land; and it may fairly be inferred, since a number of the regimental fifers were blacks of herculean build, that they extended their operations beyond continental limits, to the slave marts of northern, if not to the wilds of further Africa. Wherever lavish nature had added an extra cubit unto man's stature, there they were either to be found or expected. They over-ran Germany like vermin, and though at first the lesser Princes were glad enough to rid themselves of worthless fellows in this way, their attitude underwent a very decided change when force was used to carry off able-bodied men for the Potsdam Guard. The King had often as many as 800 or 1000 recruiting officers scattered throughout the

length and breadth of the land at one time, to say nothing of their numerous assistants. No less than 300 once operated simultaneously, under Baron Gotter's direction and special permit of the Emperor, in the Austrian duchies alone. Frontier countries they held in perpetual terror. The Saxon peasant feared to carry his produce to town on market days. The Polish monk durst not stroll beyond the narrow walls of his monastery. The Hessian mother hushed her child with uplifted finger and threats of the Prussian bogie-man.

And never, perhaps, was marauder feared with more reason. He bore the indelible stamp of the mint in which he was coined—that mad whim which stopped at nothing in pursuit of self-gratification. Frequently a soldier of the Flanders breed, his profanity was only surpassed by his brutality, his brutality by his unscrupulousness. Not for him were nice distinctions of *meum* and *tuum*. His bread depended on his success in man-hunting—a superlatively tall recruit hardly ever failed to screw a thousand ducats or more out of his close-fisted master—and in these circumstances he could be no stickler for uprightness or refinement of method.

So long as he could but come at the requisite "mass," no stratagem was too contemptible for him to stoop to, no lengths too great for him to go. He seized his prey where and how he could, playing the sneak-thief, lying till all was blue, brandishing sabre and pistol, slaying his opponent with bullet or thrust, selling his soul for bread and his master's craze. Given an inch, he took an ell. Told that he might have one man, he stole a second, and killed half-a-dozen in getting him safe away. Neither was he more of a stickler for the accident of birth. An Emperor's ambassador was not too great a lion to make a soldier, nor a British guardsman to make a grenadier. Count or cook, Chevalier or kettle-drummer, it was all one to him. Answerable for his actions to a master who respected nothing higher than inches, he was in every particular that master's most dutiful and devoted servant.

And if his master did not always support him in a manner exactly right royal, as when he marched his fine battalions to the Elbe, he yet supported him after a fashion sufficiently suggestive of the sovereign to save him, as a rule, from death at twenty paces or at the hands

of the common hangman. The over-zealous recruiter—speaking now after the manner of the royal casuist—was seldom guilty of violent enlisting; he was merely "catching deserters." Public reproof was the worst he need expect at his master's hands when his alleged unjustifiable actions gave offence to a neighbour strident or powerful enough to obtain a hearing—public reproof, and private reward.

In the recruiting instructions for Hanover, Cologne, and the Palatinate, it is true, officers were warned "to have a care how they went into those countries;" but the caution—surely a needless one, since no officer would lightly incur "the risk of being hanged or shot for the sake only of having in his company a man one or two inches higher than the rest"—implied absolutely no threat of punishment. It was merely an expression of the King's paternal solicitude for agents dearer to him than his own offspring.

A recruiting party entered a church one Sunday during Divine Service, and proceeded to help themselves to the tallest of the worshippers. The priest was at first struck dumb by the blasphemous audacity of the proceeding, but

presently recovering his wits, he announced, as an impromptu text suitable to the occasion, the words, "Cast out the unclean thing," and duly enlarging thereon, exhorted his hearers to resistance with so much unction and fervency of spirit that they straightway rose up and treated the sacrilegious intruders to a display of muscular Christianity as little in keeping with the dispensation of grace as with the orders of the King. Means were found to punish the priest, but the soldiers were rewarded for their zeal.

There was indeed but a single offence for which the recruiter, however "zealous," was ever punished, and that was the abuse of his authority for purposes of illicit gain.

Under Frederick William's ingenious method of home conscription, opportunities for extortion were by no means wanting. The grown-up generation, as we have already had occasion to observe, did not suffice the Recruiter King, and in his endeavours to find suitable food for powder he anticipated the rising one. His officers and their underlings, making a regular house-to-house inquisition, reported the advent of all infants of abnormal weight or

inches, and hunted down every gawky lad who promised to be tall, and gave him a pass or a red cravat in token of his future destiny. Complications and abuses of various kinds, both official and domestic, were consequently of frequent occurrence. An irate cobbler, whose son came home delighted with his new cravat, caught up his strap and drove the lad howling through the streets, back to the captain who had favoured him with the gift, to whom he shouted out that those who clad the King's soldiers might also feed them, since he should not. The element of tragedy was not wanting, either. A peasant snatched up a hatchet, and buried it in the head of a recruiter who had enlisted his son. He fled, and suffered no punishment, the King deeming it was wiser to hush the matter up. Other parents averse to the system bought their children off, and paid dear for the privilege, a certain privy councillor forking out to the tune of 4000 dollars before he could obtain his son's discharge. The money in this instance went into the recruiting fund, but as a rule the price of immunity from service, whether present or prospective, found another haven—the pocket

of the rapacious recruiter, to wit. No home was exempt unless a liberal sprinkling with the magic hyssop induced the invader to pass on.

The love-affairs of the rising generation, again, yielded the recruiter a golden harvest. No Prussian young man could marry without first obtaining permission from the captain on whose list he was, and although gratuities were strictly forbidden, no captain afforded his free consent to the forthcoming nuptials. The couple who desired to marry had therefore to pay the captain's price or forego connubial felicity. Whether the male candidate for matrimony was tall or short, made little if any difference in the long run. If he was tall, he paid the captain's price on the nail. If he was short, "Go ahead," said the captain, and, when the knot was tied, made the happy man his footman or his groom, or hired him out to some brother officer, and pocketed his wages as the price of the favour.

Another sheep who came in for merciless fleecing was the village pedagogue. The manner of it was this. Once the village dunce got the fact of his ultimate enlistment into his head, he threw the three R's and the authority of the

school-master to the winds—unless the latter sported the military sash or cravat. In order to keep his pupils and his living the school-master had therefore to get himself invested with the only recognized badge of authority, and to obtain this badge he had of necessity to apply to the captain of his circle or canton, who bled him freely for the privilege of wearing it.

The recruiter was perhaps not altogether inexcusable for seeking to augment his slender pay by such means as these, considering the great expense to which he was put in the obtaining of tall recruits. Unfortunately for him, the King not only sternly refused to connive at the practice, but adopted rigorous measures to stamp it out—measures which speedily involved, amongst scores of others, no less a man than Count Dohna, who was temporarily confined at Wesel for abuses of this description. An even worse fate overtook his Majesty's Resident at Hamburg—one Evans, who was detected in the misappropriation of certain moneys entrusted to him for the procuring of tall fellows. He was sent to Spandau, declares de Mauvillon, "there to end his days amongst the infamous." On the other hand, a lieutenant who forcibly

deprived the Crossen tax-collector of seventy dollars, because, as he said, he had some big men for the King's own to provide for, was allowed to go scot-free, his Majesty decreeing that since the tax-collector had disbursed the money without orders, he should have to make it good.

The aggrieved parties themselves not infrequently brought the extortionate recruiter to book for the persistent blackmail levied upon them. But there was a heavier score than this permanently chalked up against him on the public slate—a score only to be wiped out with blood, since from the recruiter's unparalleled brutality there was, all too often, absolutely no protection to be had save that afforded by the last resource of the desperate, appeal to arms. Hence affrays with the peasantry of this country or that, came to be of almost daily occurrence, and out of these encounters the recruiting clan, notwithstanding their superiority of arms and training, seldom emerged with whole skins. Scores bit the dust in the hot skirmishes which kept the Polish frontier wet with blood. Hamburgers knocked them on the head in such numbers, and with so little compunction, as to forfeit their very chances of salvation; for when

they asked that a Berlin chaplain might be sent to preach the gospel to them, the King refused point-blank, alleging as a reason that "they had no scruples in begging for his preachers, but they made a devil of a row if his officers laid hands on a rascally recruit." The field labourers of the Old Mark mowed them down with scythes and hacked them in pieces with bill-hooks. The people of Guelders, lying in wait behind dykes and hedgerows, "dropped" them like partridges, often killing a brace or so of a morning before breakfast. They were the common game, as they were the common pest, of central Europe.

At Berlin these affairs were regarded with shame, and spoken of with reticence. Ministers who could not wholly avoid them in conversation, euphemistically alluded to them as "accidents." It would be highly interesting to know how many Prussian officers died an "accidental" death between 1725 and 1740. The information will probably never be forthcoming; but in its absence it is comforting to reflect that the giant captives at Potsdam, and the kindred who mourned their captivity, did not go altogether unavenged.

Zealous as the peasantry were in hunting down the authorized bandits who levied tribute on their slender purses and their long men, the recruiter could not always count upon the score being wiped out for good and all when he had reckoned with bludgeons or scythes. If he escaped with his life, that is. The quarrel of the vassal only too often, by some unforeseen twist of circumstances, became the quarrel of the lord, and many a cock of a recruiter paid dear for crowing before he was safely out of the wood. This was more especially true of recruiters who held commissions, since, while their superiority to the common ruck gave them social status, it also subjected them to certain inconvenient demands as between gentleman and gentleman.

A young blood of the name of Pudlitz was once obliged in honour to settle a small outstanding recruiting account after this fashion. Though a Baron of the Empire, Pudlitz, like many others of his rank, was not in enjoyment of a patrimony, and therefore consented to serve his Prussian Majesty in the dual capacity of lieutenant and recruiting agent. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that his lieu-

tenancy obliged him to turn recruiter. Anyhow, acting in the latter capacity he stole a tall brewer, with the assistance of his men, from a village belonging to General Flemming, own brother to the Count of that name who was first minister to the King of Poland, and who, in his private capacity, drove so thriving a trade in "long fellows" with his Prussian Majesty.

Some little time after the brewer had been "lifted" from his vat, the General, being on the road to Saxony, was invited by a Polish gentleman to dine at his country seat, whither, as it unluckily happened, Pudlitz was also bidden as a guest. During dinner the conversation, taking one of those erratic flights which not even the most tactful host can always control, suddenly alighted on the sore subject of Prussian recruiting violences in Poland; whereupon the General, to whom the Baron was an utter stranger, remarked that few had so good reason to complain of Prussian rascality as he, and proceeded to detail the fate of his maltster in terms which reflected little credit upon those who had favoured him with a change of occupation.

Fancying the General's invectives to be aimed at him, Pudlitz reddened with mortification and

anger, but contained himself until the company rose from table, when, striding up to the General, he drew his sword and bade that officer defend himself. Flemming had only a light cane about him, but with this he kept his furious assailant at bay until some Polish officers who were of the company, seeing him at a serious disadvantage, closed with the Baron and eased him of his sword.

Here the matter would probably have ended but for a further act of folly on the Baron's part. It chanced that the General had occasion to pass through the town where the Baron's regiment was quartered, and a number of the soldiers, egged on, it is said, by their lieutenant, fell upon the traveller's coach and ransacked it on the pretence of searching for their commander's sword. The insult proved too much for Flemming's forbearance, and he forthwith sent the Baron a challenge.

It was agreed to decide the affair with pistols, a brace to each combatant, and in default of satisfaction through the medium of powder and ball, recourse was to be had to the sword. Eager seconds arranged all details in accordance with the punctilio observed on such occasions, and

at the appointed time and place the parties met. It was no "first blood" travesty that ensued, but a duel of the stern old sort—in deadly earnest, and fought to the death. At the second round the Baron fell, shot through the head.

Another source of annoyance, if not of positive danger, to the recruiter, was the Jew. The demand for "great men" presented a new opening for his speculative genius, and wherever a tall fellow was to be found, there was sure to be either a King's agent or one of the house of Israel hovering in the near background. Sometimes both were after him at once, and then the competition became keen indeed. In 1725 Count Flemming presented the King with a brace of singularly tall recruits for whom, he said, Jewish dealers had offered him as much as 2000 dollars apiece. At Potsdam many a hard and stormy bargain was driven with the shrewd interlopers. The King hated them for their interference as much as he dreaded their extortion, and scores of drastic orders were dashed off by his embittered pen against "those meddling Jews."

Of the many minor inconveniences incidental to the recruiter's calling, a curious specimen is

afforded by the friction which preceded the Hanover quarrel of 1729. Hearing that King George had renewed his interdict against Prussian enlistments in that country, Frederick William strictly enjoined upon his officers to traverse no part of the forbidden ground, when they had recruits in charge, "even though they should be obliged to go twenty leagues round about!"

For the King himself the life of the recruiter was not without its unpleasantnesses, but of all the scrapes into which his lawless craze brought him, few were perhaps so awkward, in a social sense, as the one in which he found himself whilst the guest of the Emperor at Prague in 1732. One evening it was remarked that he was not in his usual *entrain*. All his gaiety and good-humour had vanished, and those who were unaware that unpleasant news had reached him earlier in the day, were naturally at a loss to account for so sudden and marked a change of manner. The reason of it, however, was not far to seek. He had again been touched in "his tenderest point."

The story is worth the re-telling. Some officers of his, it appeared, while man-hunting

in Wolfenbüttel, had run three tall fellows to earth and conveyed them away in a close waggon; and how to face the Emperor and Empress, whose nearest relatives thus suffered gross insult from his officers at the very time when he was receiving the greatest honour and civilities from their Imperial Majesties, the King did not know. All that could be done to palliate the offence was, he declared, already done. Express orders had been sent off, on receipt of the disquieting news, for the instant release of the men and the punishment of the guilty parties. What still weighed upon his mind was, how to sustain the looks, and, what he feared more, the reproaches, of his exalted host and hostess. The best expedient that could be thought of, was for one of the ministers to go to their Majesties immediately after dinner and beg them to dissemble their knowledge of the ugly incident. Upon a positive assurance that this should be done, the King "went cheerfully, about four o'clock, to the Gallery of Paintings in the Castle, where, some time afterwards, the Emperor and Empress appeared, as it were by chance, at a farther door, and after a conversation of about half-an-hour the King took his

last leave"— doubtless glad at heart that it was his last.

The oddest part of the story is yet to be told. Whether orders for the release of the men were never sent, or whether the express failed to overtake the waggon, is uncertain; at all events the tall fellows were still in custody when the King returned to Potsdam, and the question of their retention or release was referred to that "good, sensible man" Seckendorf, who reported that he saw no reason for their discharge, since it appeared, upon their own confession, that they were volunteers! So different an aspect did the deplorable "insult" to their Imperial Majesties wear on Prussian soil!

The purely political embroglios for ever cropping up as a result of the King's man-hunting excesses, were by no means so easy of evasion as this unpleasant contretemps. The King did not, indeed, hunt the tall man as he hunted the boar, in his native wilds, or directly expose his royal person to the manifold dangers attending that noble pursuit; but as Potsdam was the kennels from which his bloodhounds were let loose upon the tall men of Europe, so Wusterhausen became in course of time the focus to-

wards which all the political effects of their ravages converged with a fierceness of heat that cost the Recruiter King many a troubled day and sleepless night. The royal château remained a storm centre as of old, but the storms no longer emanated from within it. They beat upon it from without, a tempest of fire, threatening it with destruction.

A decree launched in 1724 against the Prussian recruiter in Hanover, first aroused the Princes of the Empire to a just resentment of the injuries they suffered at the hands of the infatuated King, and supplied the electric spark that set the thunder rolling about his devoted head. From that spark the tempest grew and spread until there was scarcely a Court in Europe that did not contribute to its violence. "It is to be feared," wrote Seckendorf to Prince Eugene, "that this passion for recruiting will yet cause trouble all round."

And certainly there was every appearance of the prophecy's speedy verification. Complaints poured in from every quarter, threatenings were heard on every hand, reprisals rapidly multiplied in number and severity. In England it was the disgrace of a Prussian Envoy; in Holland, a

volley of musketry. From France came a declaration that if the violences of the Prussian recruiter in that country were not instantly put a stop to, his Most Christian Majesty should do himself justice. Everywhere the outcry was the same. States big and little, towns great and small, swelled the clamour. The Herstallers, who had unwittingly contributed a young man of generous height to the King's body-guard, seized the officer responsible for the contribution and stuck to him with grim pertinacity until their own was restored to them again. When the man returned to Herstal, his fellow townsmen could hardly credit the evidence of their senses. Such a thing as the surrender of a Great Grenadier had never before been heard of! Russia, who had hitherto treated Prussia so handsomely in the matter of tall men, rounded on him and demanded an exact account of all Muscovites in his army, to the end that such as were deserters, or had been kidnapped, should be restored to their Imperial Mistress the Czarina. The Catholic Princes of the Empire, doubly incensed by Prussian reprisals for the imprisonment of von Quade, and by an insult to the Abbess of Quedlingburg, whose placards against

Prussian recruiters had been torn down and burnt by the common hangman, added their united fury to the general storm of protest and menace. The Emperor himself awoke and hurled his thunder-bolt. "The behaviour of the Prussian recruiter"—so ran the Imperial edict[1]—"was the scandal of Germany, and had too long been regarded with indulgent eye. But connivance and patience alike were now at an end, and his Majesty of Prussia should learn whether he could with impunity defy his Head and Chief. No more Prussian recruits, from what part of the world soever, should pass through Imperial territory, and if objectionable practices were still employed to entice the subjects of his Imperial Majesty away, the guilty should suffer death, regardless of person or rank."

It was now for the King to tremble rather than to storm. So many complaints, demands and threats, coming upon him as they did at a time when the danger and difficulty of raising necessary recruits increased daily on all sides, caused him the liveliest apprehension. His ministers

[1] Afterwards revoked, so far as concerned recruiting for the Great Grenadiers.

proved but sorry comforters, being filled with the most melancholy fears and forebodings. "Prussia had not an ally in all the world. Her pretended friends were but snakes in the grass. Suppose England and Holland should join with the Princes of the Empire to clip her wings!" It was a lugubrious time at Wusterhausen and Berlin.

How to escape the storm which raged about him? This was the problem with which the King now found himself face to face, and in order to solve it he sought refuge with characteristic promptitude and resourcefulness—in magnificent prevarication! "It had never been his custom to sanction the secret or violent lifting of the subjects of other princes. The most stringent orders had been, and were still, in force against it, and he would never permit the slightest excess. Cases of it had indeed now and then come to his knowledge, but for these he had made immediate reparation. His one desire was to do that which was right, and he had accordingly just renewed his orders, strictly charging his officers on no account to take people by force or fraud."

Had this avowal, so plausibly frank on the

face of it, been in reality what it purported to be, Frederick William would have been put to little further trouble by the injured neighbours who were now clamouring for redress; but unhappily it was at bottom merely a clever compound of specious truth and covert falsehood; for while it was true that orders were issued, and occasionally read at the head of regiments, strictly forbidding violent recruiting on pain of death, it was equally true that such orders were never meant to become operative. How could they be of force, so long as the royal anger threatened to consume every officer who was unable to show a lot of fine new recruits at each inspection? Seckendorf habitually laughed in his sleeve at the plausible effusions; nor is it to be supposed that he had the laugh entirely to himself, since it was matter of common notoriety that the standing orders against recruiting by force, when not the outcome of pique or spite, were intended solely as a salve to allay, for the time being, the growing irritation of the foreign body politic.

Three clearly defined crises mark the growth of the general opposition to Frederick William's far-reaching mania. His ill-advised march on

Hanover, and his precipitate retreat, produced the first. The second followed the Maestricht volley like a sullen echo. The third and most serious succeeded the disgrace of Borcke. But no opposition, however universal or determined, could shake the hold which the passion for soldiers of superlative stature had upon this extraordinary man. Like a mountain torrent, it grew only the more violent from the very opposition it met. Circumspection it learnt in time; but surcease never came to it until the man and his mania lay buried in a common grave.

CHAPTER IX

THE RULING PASSION STRONG IN DEATH

UPON few princes did the future ever dawn with fairer promise than upon Frederick William when he mounted the throne of his father. Endowed with a constitution of iron, and leading the frugal life of a country gentleman, the autocrat of twenty-five had before him, to all appearances, the years of an octogenarian.

Unhappily, there was a worm in the bud of this fair future. The abstemiousness of the King was only affected. When indulgence suited his bent, or when opportunity to indulge came at another's expense, moderation was a thing undreamt of. His simplicity in dress long survived his simplicity in living. He might turn the laugh on Count Rothenburg and his dandified suite at a review, by rigging out all the provosts of his regiments in ridiculously big hats, feathers, cuffs and hair-bags; but when he staggered from Rothenburg's table gorged to repletion and immoderately drunk, the laugh was

all the other way. Here, in embryo, lay the fatal error of the imperious King. He put the laws of health on a par with the law of nations, and just as his iron hand could defy the one with impunity, so his iron constitution, he argued, might defy the other without fear of consequences. The error led him into unbridled licence. Excessive eating, drinking, smoking, hunting and passion made up his round of life and produced their inevitable result. He died at fifty-two, a broken and prematurely aged man.

While yet in his thirty-ninth year he began to reap the aftermath of his frequent debauches. His health failed, he grew infirm. A natural tendency to hypochondria increased upon him, and in his dejection he sought consolation in religion. The pietist Franck was much with him, feathering his nest while the frenzy held. Franck, too, had an infirmity, though not of the flesh. It took the not uncommon form of scruples of conscience concerning the actions of others. Whatever gave one pleasure was damnable in the bigot's eyes. The King took pleasure in painting, in music, in hunting; therefore hunting, music and painting were

deadliest sins, which he must put away from him would he make his peace with God. He might talk of nothing but the Word and the welfare of his soul. Cant was served with every meagre course at table; secular conversation was taboo. After dinner the King preached a sermon, which rambled on until late in the afternoon. His children, suffering purgatorial pains on their stiff-backed chairs, listened as if to an apostle. His shady factotum Eversmann led the singing, and to hear the sanctimonious hypocrite drone the canticle through his nose was often too much for the forced gravity of the young people. They exploded, and all the anathemas of the Church were hurled at their devoted heads by the royal preacher and "that dog of a Franck."

The bigot having proved the kingly office to be inconsistent with a religious life, his convert resolved to abdicate. He would reserve for himself 10,000 crowns a year, retire to Wusterhausen, and there devote his life to God and the national finances. Wilhelmine should have the oversight of the washing, Charlotte should do the marketing, while the Queen his wife looked after the babies and the cooking.

It was in 1727 that this craze had temporary sway. With reviving health the religious fit passed, and the carnal man reasserted himself. The King resumed his old alternation of extreme frugality and extreme dissipation. Nothing short of extremes satisfied him. Was it a bout at the partridges? Four hundred fell to his single gun in less than fifteen days. At pig-sticking? Between dawn and dark an equal number of wild-boar got the spear in their vitals.

The slaughter began at break of day, when in an enclosure 500 or 1000 paces square, 200 or 300 boars of every age and size were frequently let loose. Two by two, armed with spear or spontoon, the huntsmen awaited the charge of the savage brutes. Woe betide the man who missed his thrust or broke his spear! The King's lust for blood increased the danger. He compelled his pages to seize and hold the larger boars by the ears, at the imminent hazard of life or limb, whilst he ran in and despatched the bristling monsters. Those who exposed themselves the most came off covered with ghastly wounds; those who hung back were cursed for contemptible poltroons unworthy the

service of a pig-sticking King. Seldom a hunt took place but two or three were maimed for life or killed outright by the furious tuskers.

The spoils on these occasions were stupendous. In the winter of 1729, after slaughtering 1720 boars in the forests about Kopenic, the King went into Pomerania, and there added to his trophies one thousand, eight hundred, fourscore and two, 300 of which were tuskers of extraordinary size. Nine hundred or 1000 head was considered a very moderate bag for a week's pig-sticking.

The prospect of such sanguinary sport found the King early astir. By five in the morning he was up and on his way to the rendezvous in an open waggon, no matter how arctic the weather. At noon a cold snack was hurriedly eaten *en plein air*. At dusk the royal sportsman reluctantly abandoned the slaughter, only to renew it the next day with unabated vigour and zest. His cruel nature found sweet enjoyment in the sport, though he often paid dear for the pleasure it afforded him. In the great hunt of 1729 he came within an ace of losing his life at the tusks of a huge boar. A wound received at that time incommoded him ever after. When

he came out of the *mêlée* unscathed in limb, reaction supervening on the continued exposure, excitement and strain frequently compelled him to keep his bed for days. The tedium of his enforced leisure he relieved by disposing of the spoils of the hunt; and having always an eye to business, he took good care that his distribution of the game should yield him profit as well as pleasure. It was accordingly sent to councillors and Government clerks, to rich merchants and burghers, who, knowing only too well what was expected of them, reluctantly paid for wild boar at the rate of from three to six dollars a head. Jews were a special butt of the royal favour in this respect.

His extraordinary mode of travel, too, affected his health prejudicially. He moved from place to place with astonishing celerity, being to-day here, to-morrow two-score leagues away. Baggage never impeded his movements. A carriage for himself, and one or two for attendant officers, composed his entire train. The relays which awaited him every two leagues cost him nothing. The provinces through which he did not pass paid for them by an annual cess called the Vorspann. He slept in his carriage, and ate at the

houses of such of his generals or officials as lay on his route. When obliged to go to an inn, he dined like a beggar, and, for a wonder, paid like a lord. His health suffered from these lightning journeys far more than his pocket.

By 1732 he was again in a bad way. The great hunt had to be countermanded. Whoever spoke of his Majesty's health either one way or other, did so under pain of Spandau. Medicines only aggravated his complaint—a circumstance scarcely to be wondered at, since his physicians were a sorry lot, whose ignorance was of the grossest, whose methods of the most drastic nature.

One Stahl may be taken as a fair specimen of the whole tribe. He held that when the soul found itself trammelled by too great an affluence of matter, it freed itself by afflicting the body with ailments. Dangerous diseases were merely a sign of weakness of the soul, which, not having strength sufficient to throw off the superabundant matter, fretted itself away in vain endeavours, and often succumbed under stress of its own efforts. On the strength of this reasoning he employed only two remedies—sedative powders and purges—which he pre-

scribed indiscriminately for every species of complaint.

In the King the medicos found a truly captious patient. He feared their potions no less than they feared his stick. If they failed to cure him, they were murderous assassins who had covert designs on his life; if they told him the truth, they were unmitigated rogues and liars. He would swallow the nauseous doses of some pretentious adventurer during a week, and then send him flying with no other reward than blows and curses. He drew up papers, describing his symptoms at length, and circulated them amongst the doctors of Berlin under assumed names. When no two of the fraternity agreed, he loaded them with jeers and reproaches. He consulted all, and followed the advice of none.

It is remarkable that the King's health-crises invariably follow the crises produced by his recruiting mania. The Hanover quarrel of 1729, the Maestricht of 1732-3, and the Borcke of 1736-7 were each succeeded by serious, and in the third instance by fatal, derangement of health. The reason is not far to seek. The violent agitations and passions occasioned by these squabbles unhinged him both physically

and mentally, and left him an easy prey to disease whose ineradicable seeds had already been sown by excess and disregard of the most patent sanitary laws.

The deleterious health effects of the second recruiting crisis were not so easily shaken off as those of the first. Throughout 1732 and '33 the symptoms of seated disease became more and more pronounced. The King grew visibly emaciated. A racking cough gave him no rest day or night. His physicians began to fear decline. A sort of lethargy seized him; he no sooner sat down than he instantly fell asleep. His feet swelled with the slightest exertion, and an involuntary trembling affected his knees. His will, however, was still as indomitable as of old. There was in his stables an English horse unbroken to bit or saddle. This animal he resolved to mount. The horse reared and threw him, dashing the royal occiput with terrific violence against a pillar of the stable. Though nearly killed, the King was not vanquished. Mounting a second time, he stuck to the saddle for an hour; after which he went to bed and staid there until noon next day.

His life at Potsdam, where he was frequently

in residence, did him no good. However ill he might be, he seldom shirked his night duties. The morning was one continuous round of fatigues. At noon he dined. Never before or since was meal so poor and scanty served at royal table; one could not get enough. A jester, seated opposite the King, interspersed the news of the gazettes with political or social comments scarcely less wearisome than ludicrous. On rising from table the King took a nap in an arm-chair placed in a corner of the chimney. His children, if any of them were present, gathered round him to watch him snore, jeering his squat, heaving figure, his broad, unlovely face and his ridiculous wig in envenomed undertones. The nap finished, at three he sallied forth to ride, returning at six to paint, or rather to daub, until seven, when he began to smoke. Supper came on at eight, and dragged itself out to the stroke of midnight, the table-talk resembling the sermons prescribed by certain preachers as a remedy for insomnia. Deadly dulness prevailed everywhere, always. "Never in my life," declares his vivacious daughter Wilhelmine, "have I seen anything to compare with it."

About this time he began to complain of a "shanker," or cancer on his tongue. At Berlin a woman lay dying of the same disorder, and the King was excessively frightened. He consulted his physicians, who told him he smoked too much. He put out his sore tongue at them, in a figurative sense, and smoked on.

The boar wound of 1739 now re-opened, disabling his right arm, and obliging him to sign all papers with his left hand. His marginals, already famous for their illegibility, became on this account more illegible than ever. His affectation of a learning to which he could lay no claim, materially increased their vagueness. Honoured with an Oxford doctorate whilst yet a youth, he was probably the most ignorant doctor of that or any other University. In his acquisitive days—speaking still of knowledge—his big men came between him and his books, and though in after life he loved to affect acquaintance with most languages, living or dead, he was conversant, as a matter of fact, with only two—colloquial German and profane. Documents from his pen abounded in bastard French and Latin terms unintelligible, as a rule, to all save himself, while his marginals were

often wholly untranslatable or capable of several constructions, and the most unfortunate mistakes occurred owing to the difficulty of deciphering them.

General Glasenapp, commandant of Berlin, having once reported that a party of masons had become riotous when ordered to work on a holy day, his Majesty's marginal was read as an order "to hang Raedel at once." The General was sorely puzzled. None of the rioters answered to the name of Raedel—no one in Berlin, indeed, except an inoffensive lieutenant. Without loss of time, however, he was arrested; the order was read to him; a clergyman was hastily summoned to prepare him for death. Just as the sentence was about to be carried out, up came an official better versed in the King's hieroglyphics. "Hang the ringleader," was how he read the order, to the unspeakable relief of the wretched lieutenant. But here, again, a difficulty cropped up. All the masons had been equally riotous. In this dilemma the General hit upon a happy expedient. One of the men happened to have red hair, and as red was notoriously the badge of all sedition, he was forthwith led to the gallows.

In the autumn of 1734 there fell upon the King the most serious illness of his life save one. Dropsical symptoms set in; his legs swelled to the size of "two butter-tubs." The servants who helped to move him were cruelly beaten because his knees refused to bear his weight. At his bedside he kept a brace of pistols loaded with salt, with which to pepper the faces or calves of those who displeased him. His very physicians durst not tell him of his danger for fear "of having their eyes shot out." The only way to manage him was to suggest that he should order a squad of Great Grenadiers into the sick-room and amuse himself at their expense, thus falsifying Voltaire's dictum that "regiments do not make one happy."[1]

After he had lain in this condition for many weeks, his iron constitution again reasserted itself and enabled him to disappoint "the whole tribe of Galen and Hippocrates." One day he crawled out of bed and mounted a horse in the great hall at Potsdam, "to try his force to enter Berlin in the same manner." People who had been eagerly speculating on his early demise,

[1] "Ce ne sont pas des régiments qui rendent heureux."

now cried out piously that his resurrection was as miraculous as that of Lazarus.

Excepting only his mania for tall men, which nothing could make more rabid than it was, all his crazes were exaggerated or thrown into bolder relief by sickness. It gave fresh vehemence to his evil temper. Of his many disorders, anger was the chief; he raged with greater fury than any lion. It tightened his hold upon stick and purse-strings: he dispensed more blows than a slave-driver, and retrenched so much in his table that his family suffered for the common necessaries of life. It aroused all his suspicions and jealousies to the highest pitch: he would crawl from a sick-bed in the bitterest spring-weather to menace King George's arrival in Hanover with an awe-inspiring military display at Berlin; or feign himself worse than he really was in order to delay his reviews when his hated rival delayed his coming.

Nor did his son, the Prince Royal, escape his quickened enmity. One morning during his last illness the King, finding himself better than usual, dressed and called for his generals. They assembled in the great hall, where he joined them. Pipes and tobacco were passed round;

the King was in the gayest of humours. Suddenly, in came the Prince, and all, on seeing him, rose to their feet, contrary to the established rules of *tabagie*. The King went white with rage. "Ay!" cried he, "adore the rising sun; but I still live, and I'll let you see who's master."

In October 1739 came the first premonitions of the approaching end. The King who in his young manhood had had a lively eye, a handsome mouth and nose, a clear complexion and a well-turned leg, now retained few traces of those attractions. His eyes, it is true, were still lively, but his looks were "frightful," his complexion being composed of a mixture of red, blue, yellow and green, distributed in unsightly blotches, whilst his neck, as though overburdened by the extraordinarily large head that surmounted it, had quite sunk between his shoulders, giving his squat figure the appearance of being even shorter and more obese than it really was. For the first time in his life he complained of a distaste for hunting, which, he said, rendered all pleasure dull and insipid to him. December saw him confined to his room at Berlin by an oppression on his chest, for

which he could find no relief except in bursts of passion little short of frenzy. Fearing madness, those about him began to hope that Providence would speedily take him out of the world.

Early in February he took to his bed, but could not lie down. A little table was contrived, on which he rested his chin, and so slept sitting. He took leave of the Queen, bestowed his blessing on his children, and sent it also to those other "beloved children in blue" at Potsdam. The Great Grenadiers received it gladly, thanking Heaven that the time of their release was at hand.

People at large, however, suspected him of "playing a little farce" in order to observe its effect upon the Prince Royal and others who perhaps desired a change. Equally suspicious on his side, the King ordered the postal authorities to open all letters, that he might know what his subjects said about him. This visitation, and reports of an enormously swollen royal leg, convinced the public of the sad truth. The equinox, they argued, would surely seal the King's fate.

While affairs were in this melancholy situa-

tion, there occurred an incident which roused the failing giant from his lethargy, and fixed his thoughts at once upon the world departing and the world to come. On the Polish frontier stood an abbey called Paradise, surrounded by well-tilled lands, which yielded the abbot a goodly revenue, and afforded the Prussian man-hunters special facilities for their favourite diversion. The *schultz* or head-man of the abbey villages chancing to be exceptionally tall, they took him by strategy and stole him away. The enraged abbot laid hands on some carts laden with goods belonging to his Prussian Majesty, and sent to Potsdam a message to the effect that they should be given up on the release of his *schultz*. The message found the King on his death-bed. He called for pen and ink, and scrawled an order eminently suggestive of taking the Kingdom of Heaven by force, as the violent are said to do: "Let fifty hussars, and one hundred and forty grenadiers march direct to Paradise and demand restitution of my goods. If restitution is denied, they are to make an irruption on the abbot's lands, and live there at discretion." Presuming on these orders, the soldiers pillaged the abbey, flogged the monks,

and only spared the abbot because he, having taken Time by the forelock, could not be found. The King had an easy night after hearing the news.

Scarcely had the excitement of this episode subsided, when Berlin was favoured with another pleasing break in the monotonous pastime of waiting for the King to die. One morning in April there came dashing in at one of the gates a mud-bespattered carriage with the royal lilies of France emblazoned on its panels, and in it an individual who wore the livery of his Most Christian Majesty. He proved to be the bearer of a medicine, hitherto unheard of in Prussia, which no less a person than Cardinal Fleury had sent for the use of the dying King. In the case of M. Herault, Intendant of Paris, it had worked miracles after he had been abandoned by his physicians; and his Prussian Majesty's symptoms were in every respect identical with Herault's. Composed chiefly of a new drug known as "Jesuit's bark,"[1] the mixture was warranted to kill or cure in eight days' time.

In his extremity the King was willing to take the new medicine, though the learned doctors

[1] Peruvian bark.

regarded it with suspicion. They feared its novelty, they feared its reputed potency. They knew, or pretended to know, of what it was composed, and after many heated consultations they decided to administer it in a modified form. It did the patient neither good nor harm.

The physicians now abandoned all hope of his recovery, declaring publicly that nothing short of a miracle could save him. So great were his sufferings, his most attached friends began to wish for his release. The wish was apparently echoed by the King himself. He sent for his chaplain and expressed an earnest desire to go to—Potsdam! If he must die, let him at least die surrounded by his "beloved children in blue." The doctors raised no objection to the quixotic idea; as a person given over, they allowed his Majesty to do as he pleased, even to ordering his own food and medicines. The weather happening to be unusually mild, to show his people that he still lived, and to see if he could bear the air, he one day had himself carried in a chair to the stables, the next driven about the town in a chaise. A fainting fit obliged him to stop for an hour in the middle of

the street. In spite of this, however, he made up his mind to go to Potsdam, even though he should die on the road.

April and the harassed life had well-nigh run their course when the hazardous design was put in execution. Again he disappointed the doctors, who never expected to see him complete the journey alive. His arrival at the old home was signalized by the distribution of a handsome gratuity amongst the officers of his regiment. They alone benefited by the event. Though bread was selling at little short of famine prices, the royal miser refused to throw open his teeming magazines of grain. The poor and his soul he commended to God, talking in his sore extremity of nothing but death—and of removing to town again!

But he was never again to return to the palace of his fathers. A more pitiless man-hunter than himself was on his track, fast running him to earth. At his bedside his chaplain reminded him, amongst other shortcomings, of his universal violences in recruiting; of the men who had been ruthlessly torn from their homes; of the women and children left lamenting. There was no lack of suitable texts. The past teemed

with them. Within a few days, indeed, a new one had been added to the long list.

The case was this. A rich merchant of Amsterdam had cousins in Prussia, with whom he quarrelled. Hearing that he had threatened to leave them nothing at his death, the Prussian cousins petitioned the King to avert such a calamity by imprisoning the rich relative before he could make, or alter, his will; promising his Majesty a number of tall men for his guard if he would grant their prayer. The King readily assented. Enticed to Cleves, the rich merchant was arrested and thrown into Spandau, where he lay a prisoner while the King lay dying.

To all the chaplain's representations of the enormity of his conduct, the King returned but one answer: "He had been forced into these things by reason of State. The end justified the means." "Such reasons may go down with man," said the chaplain, "but with God they will stand you in sorry stead." The King professed to be convinced of this, and cried aloud for mercy.

Although the end was now imminent, the Prince Royal had not yet put in an appearance at Potsdam. An odd circumstance had revived

the enmity between father and son in all its former bitterness. There had been sent to Rheinsberg, for the Prince's signature, a mysterious paper, said to contain a project for the dismemberment of Prussia in favour of a younger brother. The Prince would not sign it, and, as the King took his refusal in high dudgeon, his friends advised him to remain where he was until his Majesty lay at the very point of death. "Don't go to Potsdam," he wrote to his sister Wilhelmine; "if you do, you will be received like a dog."

On May 28, three days before the King's death, the Prince hastened to his bedside in response to an urgent summons. He expected to find the King at his last gasp. He found him instead hobbling painfully to and fro on the parade, watching the progress of some building operations. He was received with open arms and tears of joy. "I have nothing more to do in the world," cried the King, "I have talked with my son. God grant me a speedy and easy death!"

In his dying, as in his living thoughts, his Great Grenadiers held a conspicuous place. The minute instructions which he gave for his

burial bristle with allusions to them. They were to mount guard in the town on the day he died; to be new-clad from head to foot for his funeral. Eight captains of Grenadiers should bear his coffin to and from the mourning-coach, which should proceed to the church, and thence to the grave, attended by the entire regiment with muskets reversed, the drums beating the Dead March, the fifes playing the hymn, "O sacred head once wounded." A picked detachment of giants should remove the colours from his coffin, and fire a triple volley over his grave; "and take care," interpolated the dying martinet, "that the rascals don't hang fire!" Each man, on returning to quarters, was to receive the gratuity usually given after a review; and in the great hall the officers were to be treated to a supper, for which the largest tun of Rhenish wine in the royal cellars must be broached.

Slowly but surely, nevertheless, the mania of the Recruiter King was loosening its hold upon him. "I have weaned my heart," he told his chaplain, "from every object of its affections—from my wife, my children, my army." Conversing with the Crown Prince, he recognized how wrongly he had acted in making the Great

Grenadiers his hobby, and in spending so many millions upon them. He would have broken the corps long before, he said, had not false pride prevented him; but he hoped the Prince would act more wisely when he was gone, and dismiss the tall fellows to their homes. One of the Grenadiers was introduced into the sick-room, resplendent in his new uniform. The King regarded him fixedly for a moment, then turned his face to the wall, groaning, "Vanity of vanities!" and prepared for the eternal sleep.

The marvel was that he so long resisted that sleep, or bore up under the load of infirmities which crushed him to the very verge of the grave. For weeks his lower limbs had been utterly dead to sensation or volition. His body, swollen to an incredible size, had become "as hard as a board." The very methods he adopted in the vain hope of recovering his lost vitality, were enough to have wrecked a constitution of steel. Every four-and-twenty hours he took three purges, "each strong enough for a horse." His physicians held aloof, unwilling to add to his pains by censuring his folly or contradicting his whim. And so, on May 31, 1740, between one and two o'clock in the afternoon, the end

came, and the Great Grenadiers were practically free men.

Some three weeks later they fired their triple volley of farewell over the grave of their late master—an empty grave, since the actual burial had long since taken place. That duty was the last required of them. The new King had calculated that eight complete regiments of foot could be maintained for the annual cost of the useless giants; and this discovery, rather than his father's dying injunction, decided him to disband them, and that very day the famous body-guard was "broke."

Many of the tall men elected to take the oath of fealty to the new monarch, the coming hero of many a hard-won fight; the rest went their several ways unmolested by the recruiter, whose day, for a little while at least, was over. Of the giants thus discharged the majority were English, and Massendine, Willis and Evans were of the number.

THE END.

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